White Paper Report

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Serious Sims: Scaling Digital Gaming for Humanities Pedagogy and Praxis

Humanities Significance

I & II. Project Activities Project Activities & Accomplishments

Sparked by the possibilities of introducing a humanities education to younger generations socialized by video games, social networks, and other forms of digital media, humanities teacher/scholars are breathing new life into the cultural repositories of archives, museums, libraries, and books by adding innovative social and gaming "layers" to humanities content. While exciting, the process of building new games and simulations is daunting, as not only is there no common game engine or platform from which to build digital games, but none of these "off the shelf" software platforms provide guidance that would help non-programmers feel confident in their ability to create a game on their own. Each gaming project must therefore be built from scratch, which is not only an expensive

process, but also one that requires extensive and careful coordination between content providers and technologists, who typically possess markedly different backgrounds, skills, and mindsets.

Building on a NEH Start-Up grant to develop *Valley Sim*, a web-based, multiplayer role-playing simulation on the Civil War built around primary documents featured in the Valley of the Shadow digital archive, Serious Sims proposed six primary activities over the implementation grant period to simplify, scale and further legitimize the scholarly production and pedagogical application of games and simulations within the Digital Humanities:

1) Development of nine new multiplayer simulations in the humanities, with potentially up to fifty total new sims by the end of the grant period if outreach efforts are successful.

2) Development of an authoring workflow or wizard that enables teacher/scholars with no programming background to develop and scaffold their own multiplayer simulations in five simple steps.
3) Incorporation of a digital peer review application to validate the quality of humanities games and simulations by providing feedback from teacher/scholars and students through iterative project stages.
4) Refinement of a dual-sided interface that allows students to rotate between immersion as a character in an imaginative and emergent "role-play mode," and an out-of-character "reflection mode" to promote critical inquiry and self-reflection about forms of humanities knowledge and practice constituted in the simulation.
5) Development of community features to promote sharing of supplemental simulation content, exercises, and assessment in order to reinforce the principle that each resource, while grounded in the foundational expertise and vision of their original authors, also creates emergent possibilities for learning through the "wisdom of crowds."
6) Hosting of nine hands-on workshops at the authors' home institutions to demo each completed sim and provide training to allow attendees to use the authoring wizard to create their own simulations.

The most critical objectives of building a scalable role-playing simulation platform while overseeing the creation of nine unique humanities sims using this platform were accomplished during the grant period, while plans have been made to continue the project and complete the remaining three "wish list" objectives with help from various institutional partnerships forged during the grant period. This white paper provides an explanation of

key project activities, accomplishments, lessons learned, and plans for continuation of the project.

Objective I: Development of nine new multiplayer simulations in the humanities, with potentially up to fifty total new sims by the end of the grant period if outreach efforts are successful.

The project goal of creating nine multiplayer simulations was reached, although many of the original content providers changed over the course of the project. The PI changed institutions at the beginning of the grant period, assuming a new career that made it challenging to complete the original project without extensions, resulting in changes to the project team as collaborators moved on to fill other professional commitments. Serious Sims content development proved to be a more intensive and time-consuming process than anticipated, as each content provider spent 4-8 months researching and writing sim content that amounted to approximately 100 pages of material comprised of the following parts:

- Simulation Description & Learning Objectives (2-5 pages)
- Simulation Events or Role-Playing Prompts (5-12 events x 2 pages each)
- Simulation Characters (6-25 characters x 3 pages each)

The most challenging aspect of the content development process was ensuring that each sim met the technical requirements of the platform. The simulation platform for the Valley Sim prototype created for the NEH Start-up Grant was built custom for Valley Sim, as each role-playing event was delivered to student players as interactive newspaper content. However, this custom event template did not fit the needs of other content providers, and so in order to scale the platform, generalizable features were developed, and the PI had to work closely with each author to ensure their simulations conformed to the technical limitations of the simulation platform.

The following simulations were created during the grant period:

Surprised by Emmett Till

Created by Dave Tell, Professor of Communication Studies at the University of Kansas and one of the nation's leading experts on memory, place, and the Civil Rights movement, *Surprised* uses the Emmett Till trial in September 1955 to force students to grapple with the complexities of racism and historiography (see Appendix for completed sim). The *Surprised* plot revolves around nine "surprises"—nine events connected to the Till murder that surprised the people closest to the investigation. In moments of surprise, the people in and around the Emmett Till trial tended to show their true colors. They fell off script, as it were, and revealed with particular clarity the inputs that shaped their convictions about race, class, government. This makes a focus on surprises a particularly insightful way to learn the story of Emmett Till.

Surprised is designed to foreground three primary learning objectives:

1. Explore the history of racism in an historically specific setting. By examining a specific episode, students will be confronted with a variety of *racisms* (emphasis on the plural). Students will investigate a range of cultural and political influences that moderate the practice of racism and, historically, have given it competing manifestations in different places. Among other factors, students will explore how class, sex, mythology, gender, geography, and cultural practices give racism different textures in different times and places.

2. Historiography. This is an archivally grounded project, in which students will be exposed to a wide range of archival materials. Students will read perspectives from the black press as well as the white press. They will read journalists who were simply channeling the story of the white establishment, and journalists who risked their lives to tell the truth. The experience of reconstructing a historical event from always-biased archival materials will give the students first-hand experience with archival work and a

familiarity with the challenges of historiography. They will learn to be discerning readers of historical texts.

3. The students will gain an expert level of knowledge on the Emmett Till case. The murder and trial of Emmett Till is widely regarded as one of the most consequential events in the modern civil rights movement. Students will not only learn the basic plotline, they will learn how that plotline has shifted to accommodate a range of political needs. They will also learn the events that surprised the people closest to the trial. More, the students will think about how a variety of contextual factors shaped their responses to these events and ultimately informed what we now know as the murder of Emmett Till.

Events or Role-playing Prompts:

1. Emmett Till has been killed!
2. Everybody's in Mississippi!
3. Ridicule and lies from the north!
4. It's a lynching!
5. An oversized venire!
6. Did the murder really start in Money?
7. Was Emmett Till killed in Sunflower County?
8. Emmett Till is alive!
9. Emmett Till has been forgotten!

Characters

The characters can be divided into two "teams" of five characters each: the prosecution and the defense. As team names, these labels refer not simply to the lawyers, but to the wide swath of people who were invested in securing either a conviction or an acquittal. The only character not on one of these teams is the jurors, who, as jurors, can have no investment one way or the other.

The Prosecution (those characters seeking a conviction)

1. The prosecuting lawyers. Sometimes referred to simply as “the state,” since charges were brought by state of Mississippi (as plaintiff).

2. Mamie Bradley. Mrs. Bradly was the mother of Emmett Till. More than anything else, the great migration shaped her response to her son’s murder and the trial of his killers. She had moved north to Chicago and, when her son was killed on a vacation to Mississippi, it cast the differences between north and south in bold relief. This character uses the great migration to think through the meaning of the south, Mississippi, and the differences between them.

3. The black press. More than a reporting organ, the black press was an investigative unit. Indeed, they were the most effective such unit on the ground in 1955.

4. Medgar Evers. In 1955, Medgar Evers was living in Jackson, MS, a brand new field secretary for the NAACP. Investigating the Till homicide was one of his first assignments.

5. Willie Reed, an eyewitness to the murder. Bearing legal witness to the murder of Emmett Till changed the life of Willie Reed in dramatic ways. Never again would he serve as a sharecropper in rural Mississippi, and never again would he enjoy the privilege of an untraumatized life. This character explores the tensions of witnessing white violence from the fragile position as a Mississippi sharecropper.

The Defense (those characters seeking an acquittal)

6. The defense lawyers. Like the prosecution, these men were drawn from the Delta’s planter class. Unlike these men, they accepted the appointment by choice and for a wide range of reasons (very few of which had to do with the murder of Emmett Till). Collectively this “character” is used to explore the strong feelings of localism (and the fear of outsiders) that motivated much of the 1950s racism.

7. Carolyn Bryant. Mrs. Bryant was the object of Till's "wolf whistle" and the white woman at the heart of the Till murder. I use her character to explore notions of female beauty, of male honor, and of the myth of the black-rapist, all of which conspired towards the acquittal of Till's murderers.

8. Sheriff H. C. Strider. The Sheriff was Tallahatchie County's local version of Bull Connor—a conspicuous bigot whose racism has been replayed by newsreels for sixty years. I use the Sheriff to explain how bigotry intersected with larger issues of isolationism and autonomy.

9. The white press. The Till trial was a media sensation and reporters from the world over flocked to the tiny town of Sumner, MS. These journalists tended to focus on a wide range of issues rather than the fact of the murder. The talked endlessly about rape, about school equality, about miscegenation, about voting rights, and about southern autonomy—about anything except the fact that boy was killed for whistling at a woman.

10. The murderers. The murderers were poor whites. In the derogatory term of the day, they were referred to as "peckerwoods." While there was often vitriolic animosity between rich and poor whites, sometimes (as in the case of the Till murder) racial politics could paper over the deep-seated divisions. I use the "character" of the murderers to pull back the paper and explore how poverty and race mingled in the Till trial.

The Jury

11. The jury was also drawn from a predominantly working class, poor, white population. Although they were ostensibly neutral, they shared a lot in common with the murderers. Much like the murderers, I use the jury to explore the intersection of race, class, and economy.

At Potsdam: A World in Transition

The purpose of *At Potsdam*, created by Allison Prasch, Assistant Professor of Communication Arts at the University of Wisconsin, is to expose students to the various historical, political, ethical, and ultimately rhetorical dynamics of the Potsdam Conference in July 1945. In this three-week simulation, students engage in various role-playing scenarios that span from FDR's death in April 1945 to Truman's August 1945 announcement of his decision to drop the atomic bomb. After crafting their own character profile based upon primary historical accounts, students will adopt various personas that include the leaders of the "Big Three," foreign advisers to these heads of state, and ordinary citizens in the United States, Germany, and Japan. Through these simulated interactions, students will identify, experience, explore, and critique the various ideological and geopolitical issues at stake during the Potsdam Conference, issues that were just as much a reflection of the coming Cold War years as they were a remnant of the Second World War. As students reflect upon and discuss these questions within and outside of their character roles and the digital platform, they will develop a deeper understanding of the ways in which human experiences, personal loyalties, and political interests of nation states shaped the Potsdam Conference. More broadly, these discussions will help students consider the rise of U.S. global leadership during the Cold War.

Events or Role-Playing Prompts

In this simulation, students will first craft their character persona and then respond to nine "Breaking News" events between April and August 1945:

1. Introduction: Character Sketch
2. Breaking News: Roosevelt is Dead and Truman is President (April 12-13, 1945)
3. Breaking News: Victory in Europe (May 8, 1945)
4. Breaking News: The Big Three Will Meet in Berlin (May – June 1945)
5. Breaking News: Truman Arrives in Potsdam (July 15-17, 1945)

6. Breaking News: The Big Three Debate the Fate of Germany (July 1945)
7. Breaking News: The Potsdam Declaration (July 26, 1945)
8. Breaking News: The Conference Concludes (August 2, 1945)
9. Breaking News: The Atomic Bomb (August 6, 1945)
10. Breaking News: Truman Addresses the American People (August 9, 1945)

Characters

There are three groups of characters included in this sim: Foreign Leaders, Political Advisers, and the Public.

Foreign Leaders

Harry S. Truman, President of the United States.

Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of Great Britain.

Josef Stalin, General Secretary of the Communist Party and Premier of the Soviet Union.

Political Advisers

James Byrnes, U.S. Secretary of State.

Clement Attlee, Deputy Prime Minister of Great Britain (1942-19455) and Prime Minister of Great Britain (1945-1951).

Vyacheslav Molotov, Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The Public

Katsutoshi (Frank) Fukuhara, soldier in Japanese Imperial Army and brother of Harry Fukuhara.

Harry Fukuhara, translator for U.S. military in the Pacific and brother of Katsutoshi Fukuhara.

Berliners, individuals living in Berlin at the time of the Potsdam Conference or who are returning from military service after the war [students will create their own character based upon sources provided].

Martha Holland, teenage girl living in New York [students also have the option to create their own character based upon the sources provided].

John Willey, U.S. soldier serving in the Pacific Theater [students also have the option to create their own character based upon the sources provided].

The final group ("The Public") encourages students to adopt the perspective of a non-politician during this historical period. Some of the characters are based on real people (e.g. the Fukuhara brothers, Martha Holland, and John Willey) whereas other characters (e.g. Berliners) are based on more general historical accounts. All character profiles in this group, however, invite students to take creative license and create aspects of the character profile based upon the historical accounts provided.

Gender, Work and Family Sims

Created by Jen Borda, Associate Professor of Rhetoric at the University of New Hampshire, *Gender, Work and Family* includes two, 2-3 week long simulations (*Work-Life Balance* & *Megastore)* that allow students to experience the interconnected tangles of motherhood, fatherhood, work, and family in order to analyze gender as a tradition that helps explain how the overlapping constructs of a patriarchal workplace culture (the

masculine conception of an ideal worker) and uncompromising household politics (such expectations of the good mother, and the continuing hold of domesticity) support current expectations and beliefs about masculinity, femininity, and labor both inside and outside of the home. Students also develop strategies for re-structuring the gendered, classed, and other socio-political and cultural dimensions of work-life-family balance in our current system.

Work-Life Balance

Work-Life Balance is a two-week simulation with six characters:

Characters:

Character #1: Chelsea, 35-year-old white, married mother of three small children (wife to Louis), former investment manager, now stay-at-home mom and rising mommy blogger

Character #2: Louis, 36-year old white, married father of three small children (husband to Chelsea), financial planner, 11 years' experience.

Character #3: Clay, 30-year-old white single male, no children, financial planner, 6 years' experience

Character #4: Thomas, 57-year-old white, male, divorced, one grown son. Owner of a successful financial advising firm for the past 15 years.

Character #5: Alexis, 49-year-old African American female, mother of two college-aged sons, Financial Administrator/Executive Assistant to Thomas, 12 years' experience

Character #6: Kendra, 26-year-old single, white woman, Office Assistant, 3 years' experience

<u>Events</u>

Day #1: Meet and Greet

Setting: Potluck BBQ at Thomas's house

Day #2: Afternoon staff meeting—held in the office break room; Alexis has made a pound cake and brought a fruit tray; Kendra asks everyone if they would like a special coffee order from the coffee shop down the street and goes to fill the order before the meeting

Day #3: Happy hour

Day #4: Staff luncheon to announce promotions

Megastore

Megastore is a two-week simulation with five characters that covers the topics of gender (sexual discrimination; maternal wall; gendered expectations at home; masculine workplace; white masculinity), class (middle class white resentment; forced overtime), and race (racial discrimination; social mobility).

Characters:

Character #1: Rita—29-year-old Latina female single mother of two, part-time Wal-Mart cashier with four years' experience (and holds another part-time job)

Character #2: Bob—57-year-old white, male, married father of three grown children, Wal-Mart supervisor with 17 years at the company

Character #3: Carl—25-year-old African American male, single and childless, full-time Wal-Mart cashier with three years' experience

Character #4: Claire—42-year-old white female, married with two children, full-time Wal-Mart cashier with 7 years' experience (4 years were part-time)

Character #5: Steven—27-year-old white single male, one child, Wal-Mart warehouse stock manager, 4 years' experience

Events or Role-playing Prompts:

Day #1: Meet and Greet: Characters meet up in the breakroom, introduce themselves and share a bit about themselves, their jobs, their families, their job/career goals and challenges.

Day #2 Staff Meeting—This meeting is held on November 15 in the store's entryway at 5 a.m. (before the store opens at 6 a.m. for the day). Attendance is mandatory.

Day #3: Lunch room discussion—this takes place after the Black Friday period, and during the start-up to the three-week December holiday season.

Day #4: Staff meeting with promotion announcements.

Grief, Catharsis and Ritual Violence

Created by Davis W. Houck, Fannie Lou Hamer Professor of Rhetorical Studies at Florida State University, *Grief, Catharsis and Ritual Violence* uses primary documents about the 1934 murder of Lola Cannady and the subsequent lynching of Claude Neal eight days later to help students locate several causes for lynching, understand how lynch mobs reached critical mass and the catharsis that ensued afterward, and ultimately how a lynching functioned to ensure the racial status quo. *Grief* is designed to help students role-play a very complex case from the vantage point of several historical figures across several months.

After reading accounts by historians James M. McGovern and Dale Cox, students will be asked to inhabit a number of different characters as the bizarre and troubling 8-day event played out in and around Jackson County as well as the Florida Panhandle. *Grief* then moves chronologically from the specifics of what happened in Jackson County to the reactions that were sent to Florida Governor David Sholtz; followed by how the local, regional and national press wrote about and editorialized upon the case; how the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching (ASWPL) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) treated the case; how the

case quickly morphed into a national legislative debate in the halls of Congress; and

finally, how two contemporary historians have written about the case with comprehensive

histories.

Characters

William "Flake" Chambliss: Sheriff of Jackson County was the principal law enforcement official in charge of both the investigation into Lola Cannady's death and in protecting Claude Neal.

Jake Shanholtzer: Jailer in Brewton, AL who was charged with protecting Claude Neal after his move from Pensacola, FL.

Leaders of the Lynch Mob (LLM): Nearly 30 cars travelled more than 150 miles from Jackson County to Brewton, AL to capture Neal; in other words, this was a highly organized group of white men who kidnapped Neal.

George Cannady: Lola's 60-year-old father, a relatively poor peanut farmer in Jackson County.

Walter White: Head of the very powerful and influential NAACP, headquartered in New York City.

David Sholtz: 43-year-old Democratic Governor of Florida, elected at the height of the Great Depression in January 1933.

Jessie Daniel Ames: Head of the ASWPL and progressive voice for women against lynching.

Onlookers/Participants at Cannady House: Word of the potential lynching of Neal at the Cannady house near Greenwood spread quickly on Friday, October 26. By the evening, eyewitness reports claimed that up to 7,000 people had assembled at the farm, blocking traffic up and down Dozier Road, a small dirt road that fronted both the Cannady and Neal houses.

Howard Kester: Walter White asked this 30-year-old radical Christian activist to investigate the lynching of Claude Neal immediately after it occurred. Kester was a graduate of Vanderbilt who informed his theology with social activism and the pursuit of racial equality.

Mrs. William Cornell: As part of the ASWPL's aim to have key activists in every state, Cornell's job was to prevent lynching by immediately notifying key local and state leaders of a mob-in-action. As such, she had to have immediate access to phone and telegraph, and know how to contact key public officials as mobs threatened to execute men and women.

Edward Costigan: A senator from the state of Colorado, Costigan had co-sponsored federal anti-lynching legislation in 1934—but the bill didn't pass the Senate. Walter White

asked him to re-sponsor the bill again in 1935, and the urgency was even more pronounced in the wake of the Neal lynching.

Franklin D. Roosevelt: In the midst of the worst economic crisis the United States had ever faced, 1934 was a particularly bad year for the nation's economy. Moreover, Roosevelt had very specific economic legislation he wanted Congress to act on. In brief, he needed southern Democrats to aid him in attempting to turn around the economy.

James P. McGovern: A white history professor at the University of West Florida, McGovern's place of employment (Pensacola, Escambia County) was not far from Jackson County; moreover, his library had a fine collection of newspaper and NAACP documents.

Dale Cox: A native of Jackson County, and a self-taught historian of the region, Cox collected interviews and documents from the Neal case for nearly 20 years as his family lived near Peri Landing where the lynching took place in 1934. As a local southerner, Cox had access to documents and witnesses that only an insider might, including pictures from the murder scene.

Events or Role-playing Prompts:

1. Lola Cannady's murder and the lynching of Claude Neal 8-days later.
2. Local Reactions: Following the lynching and the Marianna riots on Saturday, October 27, *Grief* turns to examine how key groups and individuals reacted to the case through letters to Florida Governor, David Sholtz.
3. The Media Response: Let's now turn to how newspapers in and around the panhandle, as well national black and predominantly white papers, editorialized about the case as our simulation moves to understanding how public opinion was shaped about the key details.
4. National Response: Several groups attempted to leverage the Neal lynching and the attendant national and international publicity for rhetorical ends; two of the most prominent groups were the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching (ASWPL). The organizations' two leaders, Walter White and Jesse Daniel Ames, and key subordinates, engaged in very vocal and strategic initiatives to further each organization's agenda.

5. Anti-lynching Legislation: While the 1934 Costigan-Wagner federal anti-lynching bill died in the U.S. Senate, the bill was reintroduced in the 74th Congress following Claude Neal's lynching in January 1935. In this section of the simulation, we'll role play public arguments for and against the bill in the U.S. Senate. Attention will be paid to the much-vaunted "southern filibuster," with an eye on the Senate's formal procedures in creating bills. We will also interrogate President Franklin Roosevelt's silence on the issue.

Trading Races

Created by Adeline Koh, Associate Professor of Literature at Stockton University, *Trading Races* is a role-playing simulation that focuses on the University of Michigan's standing trial at the Supreme Court for two separate cases on affirmative action. These cases began in 1997, when disgruntled white applicants Jennifer Gratz, Patrick Hamacher and Barbara Grutter filed lawsuits alleging that the University's admissions policies used unlawful racial preferences for minority applicants. In *Trading Races*, the Supreme Court is deliberating the results of both cases. Grutter v. Bollinger concerns admissions to the Michigan law school, where race and ethnicity is a "plus factor" in admissions. Gratz v. Bollinger concerns undergraduate programs, where race and ethnicity figures as a category in a points "selection index" to rate incoming undergraduates.

Game players are composed mostly of members of the University of Michigan Student Assembly board and a few real historical characters who played important roles in the University of Michigan affirmative action cases. These historical characters include people such as Carl Cohen, a University of Michigan philosophy professor who argued that affirmative action was unconstitutional, John Hope Franklin, a professor at Duke University and expert on civil rights who gave testimony during the trial, and Sandra Day O'Connor, a Supreme Court Justice. These historical characters are guests of the Student Assembly. At this moment in time in **April 2003**, players will assume no knowledge of

what decisions will eventually be made by the Supreme Court. But all players are well aware that everyone on campus is invigorated by these issues. As members of the Student Assembly, resolutions on these matters, along with three other race-related issues, will be taken into account by the university administration in terms of changing the College's policies on race and ethnicity. Your deliberations carry great weight. All of the decisions you make as a collective team will profoundly affect the future of undergraduate students at the University of Michigan.

Events or Role-playing Prompts:

1. Setup: The Gamemaster will introduce the main precepts of the game (setting, issues, factions)
2. Speeches. Sandra Day O' Connor will preside as a guest of the Michigan Student Assembly and the chair of the Assembly. Each character should prepare a two-minute speech stating their points and concerns as persuasively as possible, particularly in regard to their own personal victory objectives.
3. University of Michigan Diag. The action shifts to the student square for 30 minutes before voting. This will be the opportunity for the factions to begin demonstrating and convincing supporters to wear their buttons and vote according to their interests.
4. Debrief.

Characters

Factions and Indeterminates: Characters in the game constitute three groups: two factions that oppose each other, and a group of indeterminates. The two factions are the "color-blind" faction, which opposes affirmative action, and the "color-conscious" faction, which is *for* affirmative action. There are equal numbers of players both on the color-blind and color-conscious factions. The indeterminates make up the third group.

Goals of the Color-Blind Faction: To get Sandra Day O'Connor, the Chair, to draft one resolution that *completely eradicates* the use of affirmative action at the University of Michigan at all levels. To get the assembly to vote for O'Connor's resolution that best supports your faction's ideas (i.e. convincing the indeterminates).

Goals of the Color-Conscious Faction: To get Sandra Day O'Connor, the Chair, to draft one resolution that *maintains and extends* the use of affirmative action at the University of Michigan at all levels. To get the assembly to vote for O'Connor's resolution that best supports your faction's ideas (i.e. convincing the indeterminates).

The Indeterminates The indeterminates are not a faction per se. They are people who have not made up their minds on the issue of affirmative action. But each of them comes to the game informed with very specific points of view that have been informed by their own life histories, experiences, and ideological perspectives. It is the goal of each faction

to sway the indeterminates onto their side, so that they can win the most votes. The indeterminates cannot win the game as a faction, instead, they win on the basis of their own personal victory objectives.

Marriage of Cultures

Created by Laura Spielvogel, Teaching Professor of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Penn State University, *A Marriage of Cultures* uses the narrative framework of a fictionalized cross-cultural wedding between an American man and a Japanese woman to help students better understand how cultural role identities are learned, contested, and transformed through everyday social and institutional encounters and conflicts. Students engage and debate the meaning of love and marriage, gender relations, parent-child obligations, work and domestic responsibilities, and intercultural conflict by playing the role of a disappointed mother, a jilted *salaryman* boyfriend, or a corporate matchmaker within the potentially explosive context of the cross-cultural wedding. Characters debate and ultimately decide if cross-cultural difference will enrich or damage the impending nuptials between Tom Mancini and Aya Takahashi.

Weddings present an ideal microcosm by which to examine the holistic relationship of cultural institutions and the processes by which those institutions and the people that abide by them clash with one another. Conflicting and often incompatible views of family responsibility, gender and interpersonal roles, courtship, kinship, adulthood, religious identity, and ideals of love play out against the backdrop of the wedding. It is no coincidence that popular blockbuster films such as *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* and underground favorites such as *Monsoon Wedding* highlight the chaos, misunderstanding, stereotyping, and clash of cultural identity that characterize these cross-cultural ceremonies.

Learning Objectives

1. **Explore the holistic relationship of cultural institutions and the tension**

between structure and agency: Because a wedding functions as an ideal metaphor for the holistic relationship of cultural institutions, students will be challenged to confront how, for example, family dynamics, gender roles, the relationship between families and corporations, and ideals of love and romance both impact one another and generate conflict between institutional constraint and individual freedom of choice.

2. **Employ ethnographic field methods**: Because the wedding scenario simulates an initial cross-cultural encounter, students will have a chance to practice methods used by cultural anthropologists to build rapport and trust with peoples of other cultures, to learn local customs, and to adapt to different cultural expectations and constraints.

3. **Experience cultural relativism and challenge ethnocentric views**: Because the simulation enables students to learn about culture as an everyday act or performance, it can contextualize cultural behavior and therefore serve as a useful vehicle to help students understand that other cultural behaviors have as much validity and logic as their own. Additionally, because students have an opportunity to "perform" an identity different from their own, we are confident students will address, confront, and hopefully challenge the blinders of ethnocentrism.

Characters

Takahashi Family

1) Aya Takahashi—bride
2) Tomoko Takahashi—oldest sister of bride
3) Sachiko Takahashi--Mother of bride
4) Shunsuke Takahashi--Father of bride
5) Reiko Yoshida--Best friend of the bride—maid of honor, fitness instructor
6) Mariko Funabashi—mother of the bride's friend
7) Daisuke Funabashi—love interest
8) Kyoko Takahashi—paternal grandmother

9) Sumiko Tanaka—kimono dresser and bridal coordinator

10) *Shinnichi Takahashi—older brother of the bride*

11) Bridal party—Naoko--housewife and mother of school age child

Mancini Family

1) Father Anthony Giovanni--Catholic priest

2) Tom Mancini—groom

3) John Mancini--Groom's older brother

4) Angela Mancini—mother of the groom

5) Anthony Mancini--Father of groom

6) Jamal Jackson—African American

7) Rose Freeman—anthropologist

8) Natalie Tocco—child conversation pollinator

9) Peter Goldberg—Jewish groomsman

10) Grandfather—Angela's father

11) Grandmother—Angela's mother

12) Aunt—angela's sister and children's godmother

Events or Role-playing Prompts:

1. Aya and Tom break the news of their engagement in a letter.
2. Mancini family and Takahashi family/friends meet separately to discuss the news
3. Aya's mother requests that Aya meet with Daisuke to reassure herself that she is doing the right thing. Friends and family can weigh in on the issue of love marriage versus arranged marriage, pros and cons.
4. Aya sends a letter to her mother agreeing to meet with Daisuke one-on-one when she returns to Japan to finalize plans for the wedding.
5. Aya and Daisuke meet one on one for their controversial tea.

6. American families fly to Japan for the 10-day festivities, will meet in two age-based groups.
7. Have an engagement party with all members with a series of toasts where they can publicly and formally air their opinions for the last time prior to the wedding
8. Religious ceremony.
9. Reception.
10. Write the cards attached to the gifts to give the final goodbyes.

Valley Sim

PI Chris Spielvogel used a NEH Digital Humanities Start-Up Grant to develop a prototype for *Valley Sim*, which enabled students to discuss and debate Civil War-era issues of slavery, secession, war, emancipation, and surrender from the perspective of former wartime residents based on primary documents featured in the award-winning Valley of the Shadow digital archive.

Spielvogel created *Valley Sim* as a role-playing simulation on Civil War rhetoric and history that enables students to rehearse and critically examine the arguments used to support slavery, secession, war, and emancipation. The sim is built around primary documents featured in the award-winning Valley of the Shadow digital archive, which contains over 100,000 digitized photographs, diaries, letters, maps, census records, and newspaper articles from people who lived in two warring communities -- Augusta County, Virginia and Franklin County, Pennsylvania – separated by 200 miles in the Shenandoah Valley. By selecting the most dramatic, illustrative, and vital fragments from this digital archive, *Valley Sim* generates an immersive, ground level narrative of the Civil War that students experience anonymously as one of twenty-five characters in an 10-12 week simulation. Valley Sim characters are based on the lives of Augusta and Franklin County's residents whose actual wartime diaries and letters have been digitized in the

Valley archive. Students engage and debate the war's most important issues, events, and ideas from the perspective of their character.

Valley Sim strives not only to provide an accurate local history of the war, but also to create a space whereby students can dramatically understand the motivations, for example, of former soldiers, newspaper editors, pastors, farmers, slaves, politicians, homemakers, nurses, and lawyers. The *Valley Sim*'s characters also reflect the economic, racial, religious, political, and occupational diversity within the counties so that students can reconstruct and bring into simultaneous dialogue the multiple perspectives that informed arguments for and against slavery, secession, Union, war, emancipation, and eventually surrender. Designed to also help students grapple with issues of historical contingency, presentism, and the role of memory in shaping public understanding about the past, the sim provides players with an emotional, imaginative, and intellectual entrée into the nontransferable world of Civil War history, and while students cannot change the past, they do possess the freedom to develop a range of connections with other individual characters and subgroups through anonymous correspondence.

Valley Sim's events are triggered by two interactive online "newspapers"—one for each county—that report the local and regional stories and events to stimulate student role-playing, and prompt characters to meet in chat rooms to discuss topics raised in the articles. There is a total of twelve volumes of newspapers for each county. The local articles have been selected from the counties' respective Democratic, ex-Whig, and Republican newspapers as featured in the *Valley of the Shadow* archive, while "community features" emphasize the social and physical conditions of wartime life, and include articles on topics such as marriage, race relations, religion, illness, and death.

The grant period was used to incorporate evaluation feedback to shorten the length of *Valley Sim* by dividing the sim into several shorter, more manageable simulations

around the following singular themes that could be experienced in individual course units of 2-3 weeks instead of an entire semester:

Valley Sim #1: John Brown's Slave Revolt & Trial

Valley Sim #2: Secession or Union? The Virginia Secession Debate

Valley Sim #3: The Wartime Experience

Valley Sim #4: Emancipation

2) Development of an authoring workflow or wizard that enables teacher/scholars with no programming background to develop and scaffold their own multiplayer simulations in five simple steps.

3) Incorporation of a digital peer review application to validate the quality of humanities games and simulations by providing feedback from teacher/scholars and students through iterative project stages.

A platform to support free online usage of the nine multiuser role-playing simulations was successfully created and tested during the grant period. Serious Sims is a custom web application based on the Ruby on Rails framework where students can take part in simulations by playing assigned character rolls during a series of chat events. The student-facing side of the application can be used on mobile and desktop environments. Leveraging new technology in Rails that permits performant, scalable two-way communication channels, chats take place asynchronously (in realtime), so that as dialogue evolves during a chat, a transcript is instantaneously being compiled in a relational database for the instructor to review/grade later.

The administrative side of the application includes a straightforward web interface for instructors to create and manage their simulations. Instructors can add content, define characters, cast their students as characters, and create and schedule events. Instructors have the flexibility to selectively assign certain cast members to role-playing chats. Once anonymous role-playing chats have taken place, instructors can review the

transcripts to evaluate their students' participation and performance. The identities of students playing characters is only visible to instructors, and not to other students in a chat.

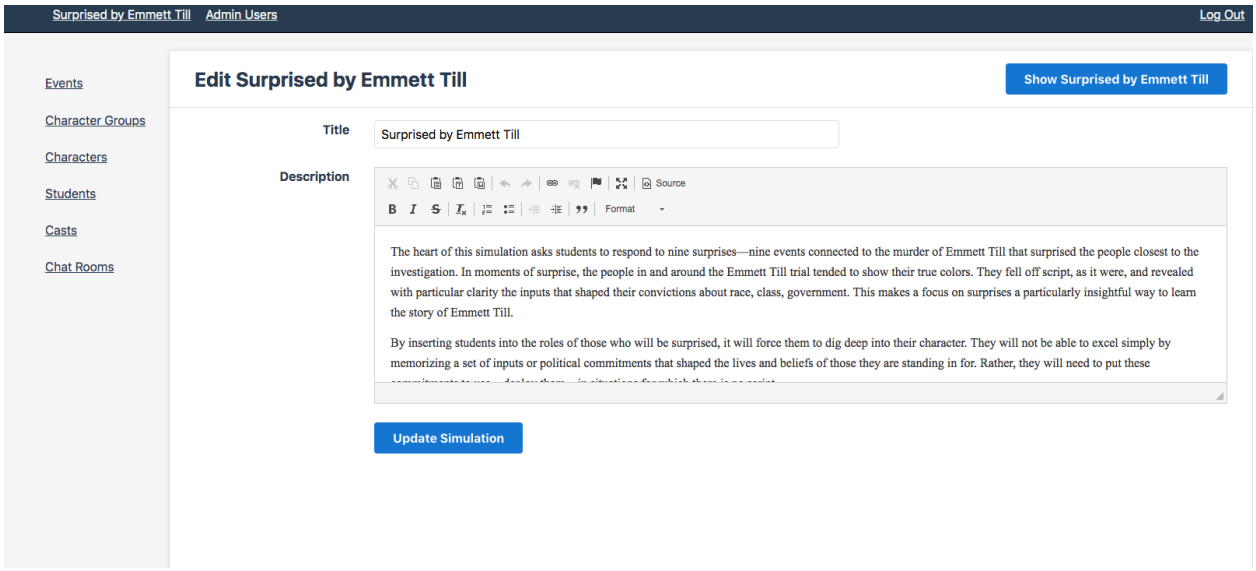
Serious Sims includes a robust user authentication system based on usernames and encrypted passwords which distinguishes between instructor/admin and student types of users. Student users are not able to access the administrative side of the application. While in transit, all web requests are encrypted via HTTPS.

The Serious Sims role-playing platform was designed to allow anyone regardless of programming background to use the platform's admin features to create their own simulation using the following procedures:

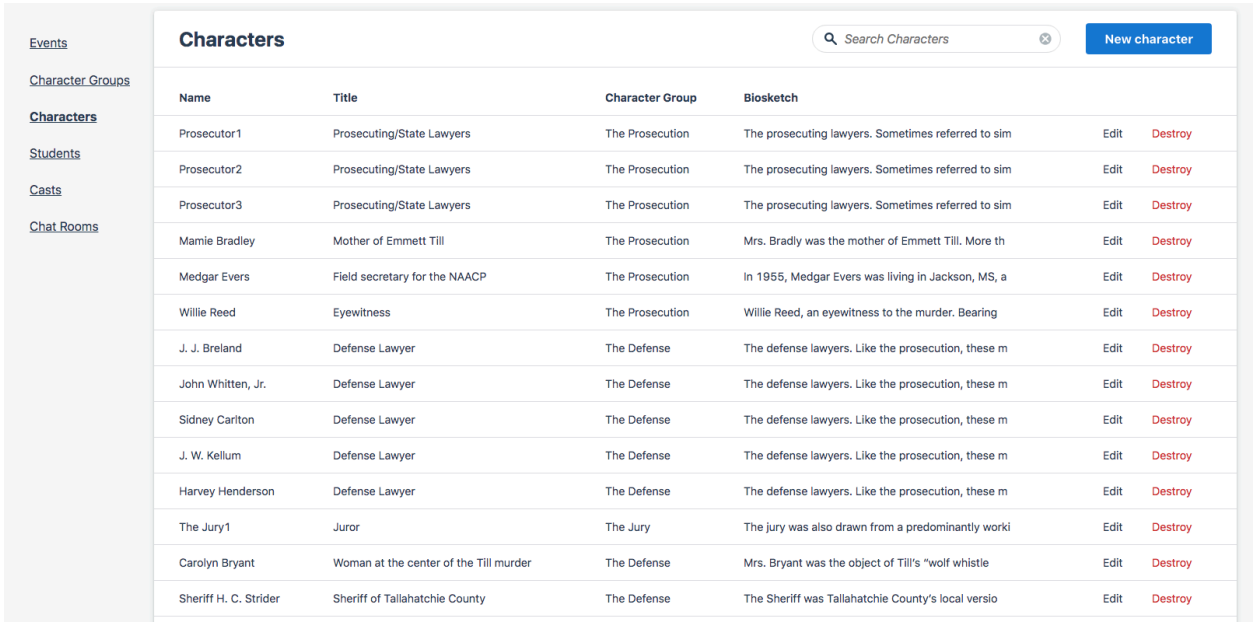
Administrative Interface

The administrators set up simulation instances for instructors. The administrator interface provides the following capabilities:

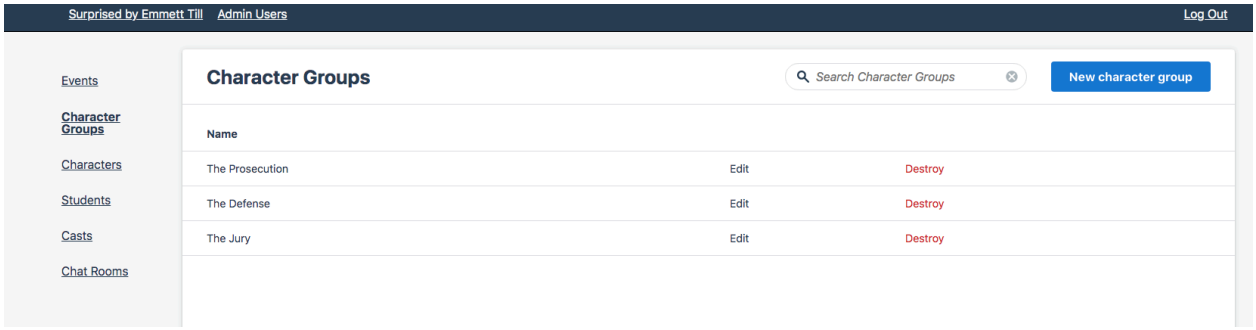
- Create new types of simulations ("templates") and add appropriate content



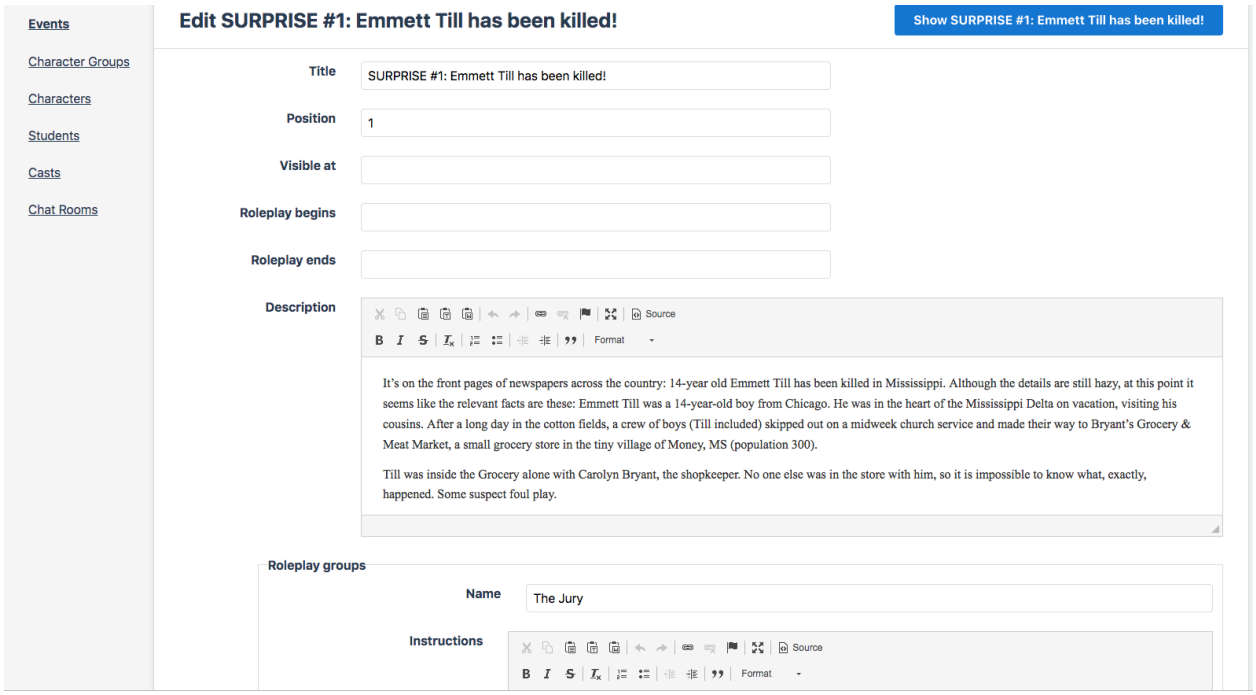
- Create and edit new characters



- Create character groups and assign individual characters to groups



- Create and edit simulation events and assign groups/sides to role-playing chats for those events.



- Set up new simulation instances based on a template
- Invite instructors to new simulations
- Perform any of the actions that an instructor could perform, in order to provide assistance and support for each simulation

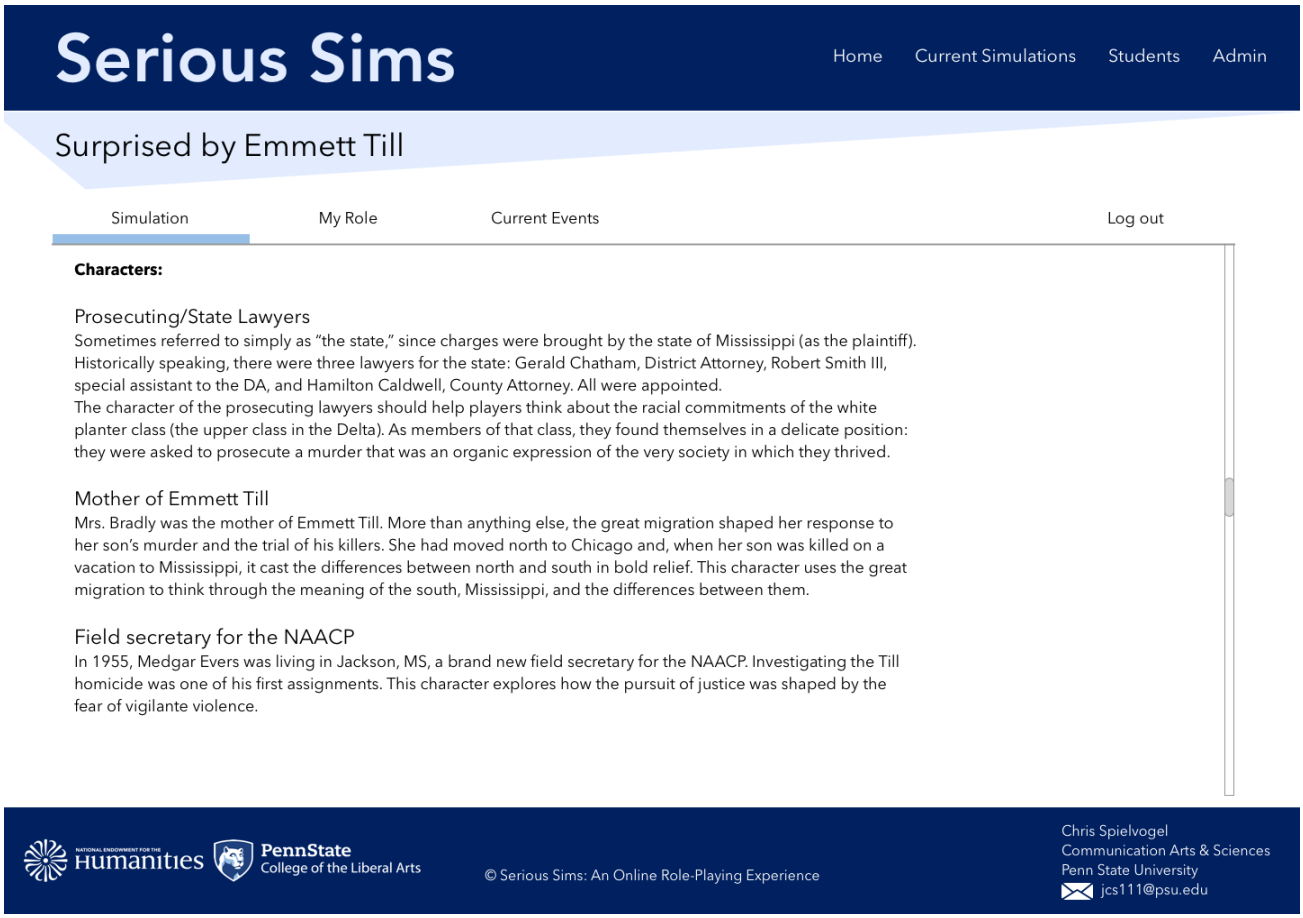
The Serious Sims platform also includes student and instructor interfaces with the following capabilities:

Student Interface

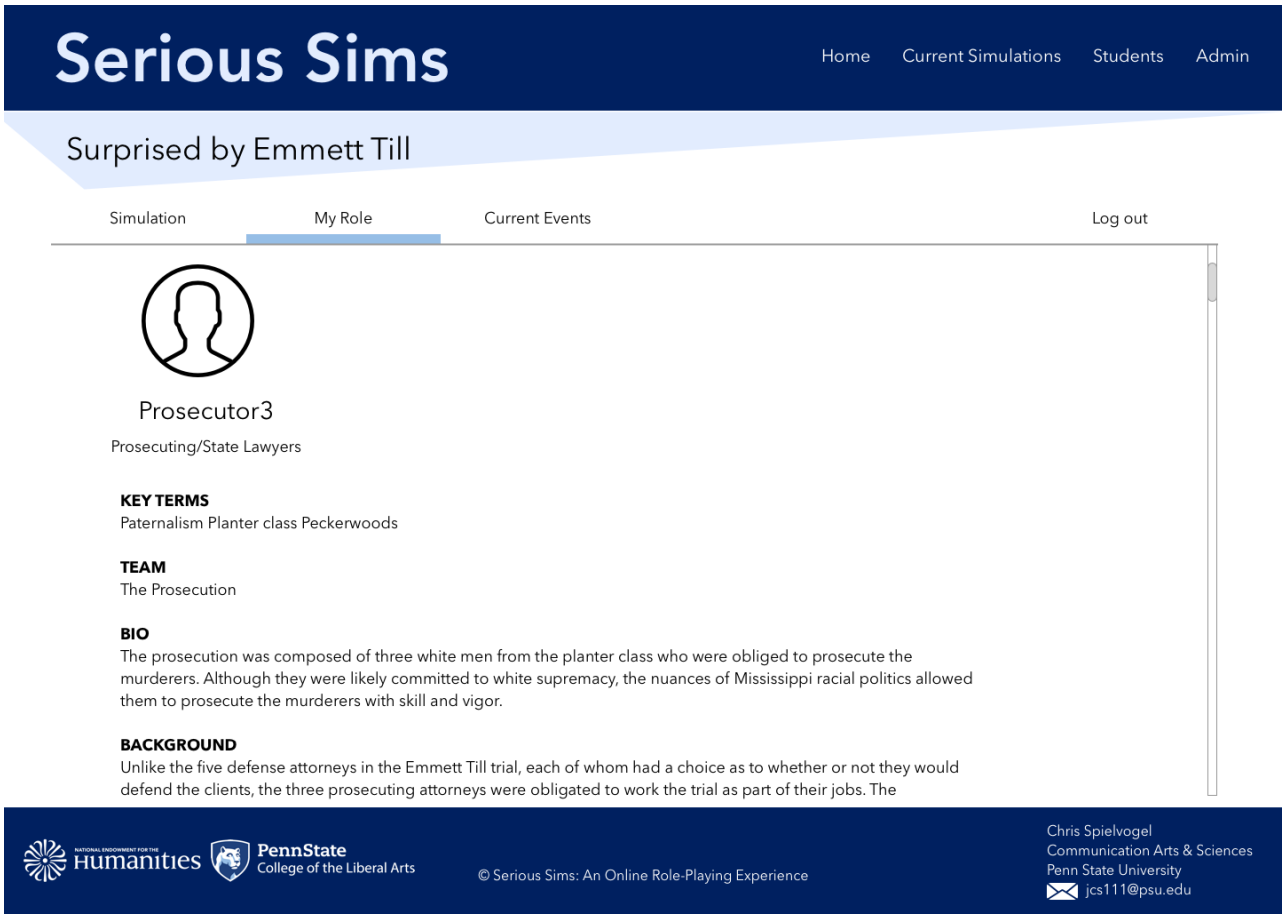
The core web interface is for the students, who progress through the following steps over the course of a 2 to 3-week simulation:

1. Receive an invitation to sign into the simulation.

2. Browse through the available biographical sketches to select their preferred role.



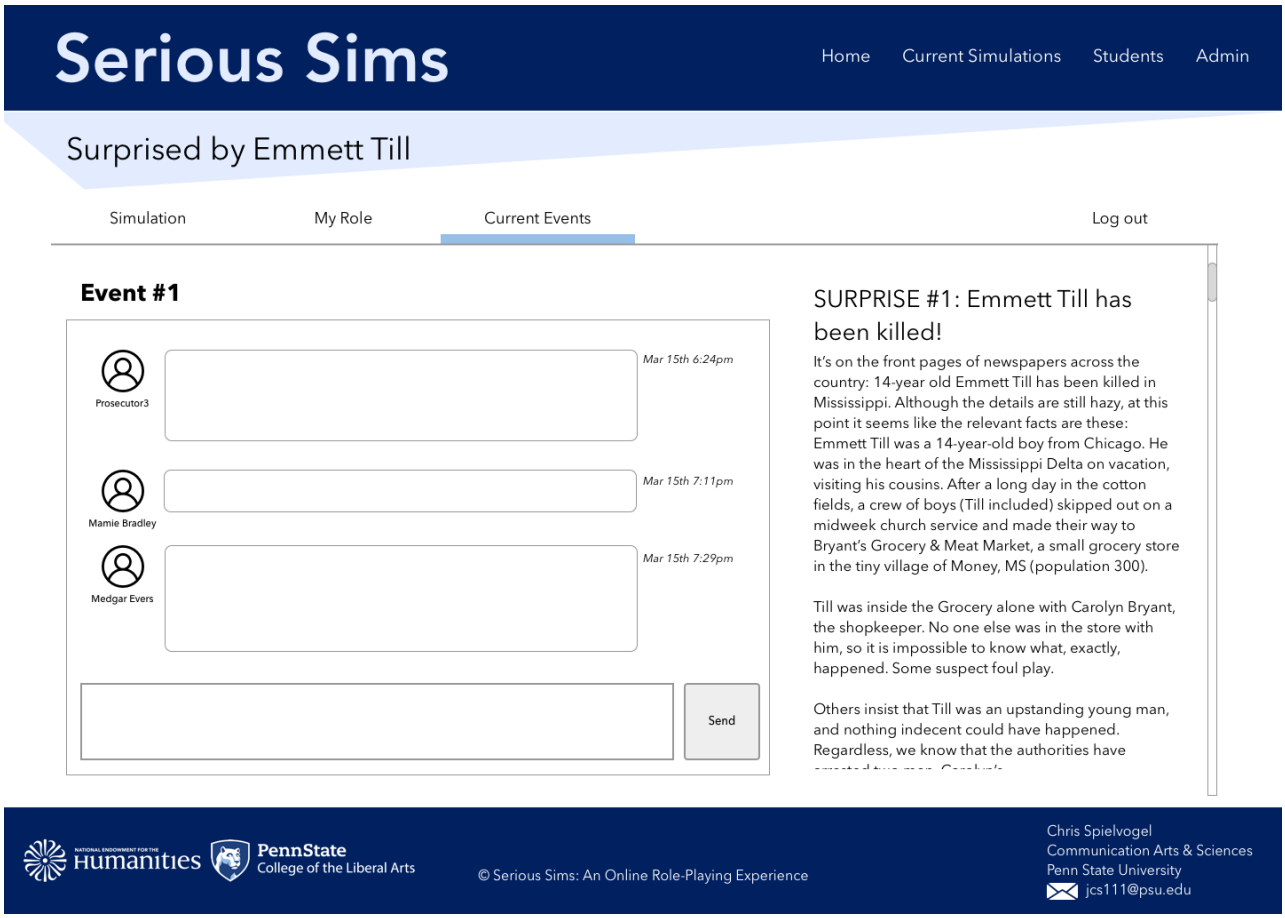
3. Receive their actual role from the instructor.



4. Read the detailed biography and context for the role that they will be playing.

5. Engage a series of “events” with detailed descriptions and instructions for online anonymous role-playing chat.

6. Engage in an anonymous online role-play chat with other individuals, sides, or sub-groups depending on the event instructions.



7. After each event, a student can review the full transcript of the chat.

While the students are chatting with others during the role-playing, no one is aware of each other's' true identities — everyone is speaking in their adopted role, and this is what makes the application and learning process unique. The student interface takes a "mobile first" design approach, and was designed to allow the students to perform the chat from their mobile phones' web browser.

Instructor interface

The instructor interface provides a means for the course's professor to facilitate the simulation during the 2 to 3-week time period, and to interact with the other players. The sequence of instructor actions and capabilities during a simulation are as follows:

1. An instructor receives a new instance of the simulation for their class from an administrator.

2. The instructor can review and revise the content and biographies for each character.

3. The instructor can set and adjust the dates and times for the “events” when the students will role-play in response to a specific event. The instructor can also adjust the introductory content for the event.

4. The instructor can invite their students to join the simulation.

5. The instructor can participate in the event by adopting one of the roles.

6. The instructor can edit or delete (i.e. moderate) others’ chat messages.

7. The instructor can review statistics and transcripts for each student and for the chat as a whole, after each event is complete.

Objectives 4-6

4) Refinement of a dual-sided interface that allows students to rotate between immersion as a character in an imaginative and emergent “role-play mode,” and an out-of-character “reflection mode” to promote critical inquiry and self-reflection about forms of humanities knowledge and practice constituted in the simulation.
5) Development of community features to promote sharing of supplemental simulation content, exercises, and assessment in order to reinforce the principle that each resource, while grounded in the foundational expertise and vision of their original authors, also creates emergent possibilities for learning through the “wisdom of crowds.”
6) Hosting of nine hands-on workshops at the authors’ home institutions to demo each completed sim and provide training to allow attendees to use the authoring wizard to create their own simulations.

Project objectives four and five represented “wish list” items that the project team was unable to complete due to either shifting prioritization or time and/or budgetary constraints. At one point during the project, a basic version of the dual-sided interface was pushed to a beta server and placed into a testing environment, but the feature was not stable enough to use, and was deemed unnecessary by our authors who wished to use the classroom (or their university LMS) to conduct the “out of character” debriefing sessions. There are no future plans to develop this feature because it was not deemed essential to the role-playing experience.

Similarly, the fifth objective, “the development of community features to promote sharing of supplemental simulation content, exercises, and assessment,” was not deemed essential because project outreach did not gain the dissemination necessary to justify the

time and budgetary cost of creating community features for the simulation platform. This "wish-list" item, furthermore, may only be deemed critical in the future if end-users demand its creation. In the meantime, this objective will be fulfilled using existing tools; the PI will use Box, a cloud content management and file sharing service, to host supplemental sim content files that other instructors create and wish to make available to other instructors. Box is currently being used to host all content files for each simulation created for this project.

Lastly, the extensive time required to develop and publish the nine simulations while developing a generalizable platform that eliminated any custom elements from each sim left no time in the grant period to host the hands-on workshops at each institution. Authors' teaching schedules also made this effort challenging. However, this objective will be accomplished after the conclusion of the grant period. Borda will pilot her simulations in Fall 2019, and Prasch (U. of Wisconsin), Houck (Florida State U.), and Tell will host workshops and classroom pilots in Spring 2020. PI Spielvogel will use funds from departmental travel budget to visit each institution on the last day of each instructor's sim pilot to collect oral and written feedback from students.

III. Project Evaluation

Serious Sims outreach efforts did not gain the dissemination necessary to implement the evaluation component of the project as described in the initial proposal. The project team did gather qualitative student feedback from an extended pilot of the Marriage of Cultures simulation, however, and the following testimonials from students at Western Michigan University from 2014 demonstrate a high degree of self-reported engagement with material as well as an increase in perspective taking, a heightened experience of creative and realistic play, a strong connection between course material and practical application through role-playing, and a high level of satisfaction and enjoyment with the learning experience as a whole:

During the simulation, the most surprising thing that I learned was actually about my fellow classmates. [Before the simulation] I felt that about half the class didn't get involved. But once we started this simulation, I felt that every single character was involved and playing their role. Meaning that no one was just sitting in the corner being quiet or shy, making it a very fun experience. (Anthony Sands)

The most rewarding aspect of my character was being able to offer guidance and encouragement to my son, Tom. Anthony had a unique perspective on things. He (and Angela) had the exclusive role of raising Tom and his brother, giving them a vested interest in their ultimate happiness ...At the same time, I am not a sixty-eight year old married man with a son that is about to get married (I do not plan on being in that situation for a LONG time). (Ben Hackett)

I liked the fact that the simulation was open-ended. A scripted simulation would have felt much less realistic, and seems comparable to a play being read line-by-line without any emotion. (Ben Hackett)

Playing a character that was a bit different from myself was an interesting experience, to say the least. It provided some interesting challenges and caused me to stop and think a few times to figure out what my character would think and not just what I think. The most rewarding part of the whole experience was definitely being able to fall into the story and forget that all of the characters were being played by classmates. I really enjoyed being able to forget that the situations we were acting out were fake. (Sam Wilson)

The most surprising thing about the entire simulation for me was the ability for it to feel so real even when I was just typing into a chat window. I've never really been one for performance art or anything so playing a character was very new for me. That feeling of playing a character and at times kind of forgetting you're just acting was very new and interesting for me. The situations that played out felt pretty real or at least plausible to actually be able to happen. I was impressed that no character felt unrealistic or silly. (Sam Wilson)

I found the online simulation to be very insightful and educational. It was a once in a life time opportunity to be able to participate in an activity like this …I definitely recommend doing this for every class…Playing a character of a different age allowed me to skip to my future and see what it's going to be like to get married. Even though most marriages don't have that many struggles, there are still many challenges. My experience with this simulation allowed me to get a taste of what I am going to need to go through when I'm older (Eric Winkler)

I found it extremely fun and exciting to play a character. Most classes simply just teach a lecture every class. To be honest, if I were to be lectured every day for fifteen weeks about Japanese culture, I would lose interest fast. With the simulation, I was able to learn more about Japanese culture and enjoy doing it. It is sometimes hard to go to class every day knowing you have to force yourself to learn. With this simulation, there was no forcing necessary. I looked forward to participating and learning more. The reason I believe this simulation was so successful is because it is as close to real life as a classroom can get …Coming into this, I knew very little about Japanese culture and I was very disinterested. However, now that I've learned so much and found out how interesting it really is, I look forward to a pursuit of more knowledge. If I could talk to students who have the opportunity to participate, I would strongly encourage this and support it 100 percent … There is not one bad thing I could possibly say about the simulation. (Eric Winkler)

It was so much fun to play a character in the Marriage of Cultures simulation! I enjoyed every aspect of the experience but I looked forward to participating in the chat rooms especially. It's not as if anyone knows who you are so you're free to play the character given to you. They don't act anything like your real self? That's fine! Go with it, try new things, and have fun doing it. It's amazing where the storyline can go…I have never experienced a simulation such as this so I

honestly believe I will remember the entire aspect of it. I enjoyed being another person and living though someone else. (Ashley Wall)

Overall, I had a wonderful time participating in the simulation and learned a lot more about Japanese culture from my participation. (William Strong)

The greatest reward that stemmed from the simulation was its implications on my life … This simulation went hand in hand with some situation that I am currently going through, and as I lived "Tom's" life for a month it really helped me deal with some situations that I am challenged with today! (Stanley Hays)

It was very entertaining! I really enjoyed stepping into someone else's shoes every Tuesday and Thursday! To other students debating on participating … I would say it's a must … It's a fantastic learning module that really involves students, which in turn enables them to obtain a serious sense of reality when it comes to cross-cultural marriages and the decisions that one must make. For current students like myself, it's important to keep in the back of your mind that as technology advances and more pressure is put on corporations to expand into the global marketplace, current cultural diversity may put you in this similar situation faster than you expect. Therefore, this simulation, if taken seriously, could really be an asset to you in the years to come. (Stanley Hays)

The most surprising thing I experiences was the passion and emotional impact I felt and received from others throughout the … simulation. I found myself getting so worked up sometimes and had to regroup myself because I would remember it's just a simulation, this isn't really happening to me! It's funny, however I felt the same emotional responses from the majority of characters, which made the simulation more realistic and more enjoyable! (Stanley Hays)

Prior to the start of the simulation my first impression was a feeling of indifference … In retrospect, I am extremely impressed with the impact it had on me … and am excited that it will be published and others will get to experience the real life feeling of the [simulation] (Stanley Hays)

The most rewarding part of playing a different character was … seeing the world from a different viewpoint. Unless you are an actor, you don't normally get to live in someone else's shoes … I identified with Holly in that she does not want to be too pushy … And it was interesting to see that, if you don't make your thoughts and desires known, chances are good that people won't know what you are thinking or wanting … I will remember many things about this simulation, but one of htemost memorable is being addressed personally, noticed, or "touched." It struck me how much meaning those little things had in my experience of the simulation,, and I will remember that and use it more fully in "real life" … The characters are now people I know like characters in a book or a movie that I've read, and they will stick with me like Anne of Green Gables, or Peter, Susan, Edmund or Lucy, or Ron, Harry, and Hermione. (Mica Trupiano)

Playing Tomoko taught me some very important things about not only the culture of Japan but also about my culture in America. (Amber Depree)

It's a wholly different experience to act out someone's life than it is to simply read about it…you learn a good deal more by applying knowledge into "real-life" scenarios as opposed to just having static knowledge on a subject … I learned quite a bit about gender roles and education from my own character. (Jordan Lewis)

When one's basis for "normal" rests on his/her own culture, it's very easy to draw on stereotypes and otherize the culture of another person (Jordan Lewis)

Having to step out of my regular personality was also the most rewarding part because Mamiko's personality had no resemblance to my own, and I was very excited and intrigued to see how easy it would be to allow myself to be a soft spoken … It also made me painfully aware of how American women might appear overseas. I pride myself on a lot of things that would not be

viewed as positive attributes in Japan, including my strong will, my tendency to make conversation with perfect strangers, and a strong drive to advance myself in society. (Morgan Butts)

One of the rewarding parts was being able to be someone else while not allowing anyone in the class to know who I was … I enjoyed playing my character, and I really started to feel like my character. During different conversation I felt extreme frustration, sadness, love, anger; everything that I feel in real life. (Brooke Tennant)

One of the most rewarding parts of being able to play the character that I played was the fact that I was playing as a female. This allowed me to look at the situation differently and it allowed me to kind of have free rein over what I could do…(Edward Clancy)

Shinnichi was a challenging character for me to play for several reasons. He was a 34-year old man, while I am a 19-year old woman. I am American, while he was Japanese … Shinnichi is sexually attracted to men but has a wife and a daughter. This was particularly challenging for me partly because I am heterosexual but mostly because I am an avid supporter of gay righter, the LGBT community, and the notion of being out and proud when it comes to one's sexuality … It was challenging to play a character that was "in the closet." (Sarah Neff)

It was invigorating to say and do things I would never dream of actually saying or doing, and it was to do so in the safe context of a simulation. The anonymity of the simulation added to the fun; it made me less self-conscious about character decisions. Shinnichi's fate was in my hands. Being in charge of a character's actions was sort of empowering. If I so wished, I could sit back and watch the events of the simulation unfold in front of me, or I could stir the pot and cause drama. Secrets could be kept or revealed. (Sarah Neff)

I did drama in high school and since then I haven't had a chance to act. This was like being in a play again; that was my favorite part of acting, you get to be someone totally different…After I was able to step away and review what went on I would laugh and be really thankful that this wasn't really my life. I also found myself learning as I went. Reading the books gave me a great background, but once you were thrown into this role, this life, and you had to obey by the rules that were set out before you, you are able to better understand the culture … It was a lot of fun, but it was also a great learning experience. I have to say that by putting myself in my character's shoes, I was able to learn more about the culture. I was able to experience it rather than just read about it. I would have to say that I learned more this way than from the book. (Beth Brandon)

One thing that really surprised me during the simulation was how much I got into it. I was excited to get online and see what would happen next. I thought that when we first started I would do what I had to, to get a good grade. I thought that it would be boring and people wouldn't really act in character. However, I found out that I was mistaken. People got very involved, even more so than in class … I had a blast and felt that I learned much more about the culture than I would have just reading a book … It is a great learning experience. (Beth Brandon)

As one of the older characters, Angela had to express things in a different way than I would as a young adult. I truly enjoyed this part of the experience. It caused me to think about things that my grandmother would have said … In relating Angela to my own grandmother, it caused me to think about the world the way that she might. It actually really helped me to understand a lot of the things she often says or certain ways she reacts to things in real life.

Being an actor, it was probably quite a different experience for me than others because I do this in every day life; but one thing that really helped me even as an actress was the fact that I could play an older woman. Because the goal of acting is to create truth, right now, in my life, I can never play an older woman because it would not make any sense visually. Without the visual aspect of the play, I could be anyone I wanted and really explore all aspects of her. One reason I love being an actor is because it's a freeing experience to be able to express myself in other ways that I wouldn't normally. Another reason is because it gives me an opportunity to learn about people

from other backgrounds and who simply just live life in a different way than I do. It allows me to view them in a whole new way and appreciate the life they life; it cause me not only to value them as people, but also to remember that there are more people on this planet than just me and my minute life. That's something that I really think is wonderful about this … simulation … It give people freedom to discover new ways of living and new experiences without having to really live them. (Alicia Humphrey)

It gave me true perspective about stereotyping and how even though we stereotype people into their own categories that they really are still real people with real thoughts and emotions. (Alicia Humphrey)

I think what was most interesting at the end of the simulation is how I have all of these memories that are not my own, they're from the character I played. Things would happen in the simulation, and I would feel a certain way because I assumed that's how my character would feel, and I have a memory of it now. So on top of all my own memories that I made in my life, it's like I have memories from this whole other person to carry with me now, too. (Morgan B)

As stated above, Serious Sims content development proved to be a more intensive and time-consuming process than anticipated, as each content provider spent approximately 4-8 months researching and writing sim content that amounted to approximately 100 pages of original material for a 2 to 3-week simulation. Additionally, in order for the Serious Sims platform to scale, it had to be account for content variances that could only be understood as the sims were developed over the course of the grant period. Therefore, project outreach and evaluation largely had to become part of the project's plans for continuation and long-term impact.

IV & V. Continuation & Long-Term Impact of the Project

Content providers at Florida State University, University of Kansas, University of Wisconsin, Penn State University, and the University of New Hampshire have agreed to use their simulations in their classes in 2019-2020. These faculty have also agreed to present the results of their classroom pilots at the National Communication Association convention in 2020 as part of a panel created by the PI. The panel will be used as an opportunity to recruit new simulation authors as well as sim adopters for their courses. The nine simulations will be publicized as free resources in FA19 to all faculty who are members of the American Historical Association and National Communication Association through their respective listserv announcements of new books and resources. Penn

State, the grantee institution, will support hosting costs for the Serious Sims platform for the next two years. The PI will continue to serve as the point-of-contact for instructors interested in using the nine simulations, and for authors interested in using the Serious Sims admin features to create their own simulations.

The PI intends to apply for internal funds both through the Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence that would provide summer stipends to authors interested in creating new simulations, and the Teaching and Learning with Technology Impact Award, which would provide funding to hire an undergraduate assistant to manage Serious Sims help requests from instructors and student users.

VI. Award Products

As described above, the Serious Sims platform was created during the grant period along with nine new and/or revised simulations that use the Serious Sims platform. Serious Sims is now available as a free platform for creating and playing multiplayer role-playing simulations in the humanities, and can be used as a platform by faculty and other content providers to create new role-playing simulations regardless of one's technical background or expertise. The simulations created for this project were authored by tenured humanities faculty members in the fields of Rhetoric, English, American History, Cultural Anthropology, Women's Studies, and African American Studies.

Appendix: Sample Simulation

Surprised by Emmett Till
Serious SIMS

Dave Tell
The University of Kansas

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
This project uses the Emmett Till trial in September 1955 to force students to grapple with the complexities of racism and historiography. While the project provides a range of emphases and can be modified by the instructor to fit a variety of needs, it was designed to foreground three primary learning objectives.

1. Explore the history of racism in an historically specific setting. By examining a specific episode, students will be confronted with a variety of *racisms* (emphasis on the plural). Students will investigate a range of cultural and political influences that moderate the practice of racism and, historically, have given it competing manifestations in different places. Among other factors, students will explore how class, sex, mythology, gender, geography, and cultural practices give racism different textures in different times and places.

2. Historiography. This is an archivally grounded project, in which students will be exposed to a wide range of archival materials. Students will read perspectives from the black press as well as the white press. They will read journalists who were simply channeling the story of the white establishment, and journalists who risked their lives to tell the truth. The experience of reconstructing a historical event from always-biased archival materials will give the students first-hand experience with archival work and a familiarity with the challenges of historiography. They will learn to be discerning readers of historical texts.

3. The students will gain an expert level of knowledge on the Emmett Till case. The murder and trial of Emmett Till is widely regarded as one of the most consequential events in the modern civil rights movement. Students will not only learn the basic plotline, they will learn how that plotline has shifted to accommodate a range of political needs. They will also learn the events that surprised the people closest to the trial. More, the students will think about how a variety of contextual factors shaped their responses to these events and ultimately informed what we now know as the murder of Emmett Till.

KEY TERMS
Paternalism, sex, autonomy, planter class, peckerwoods, boyhood, “the south,” Mississippi, the great migration, vigilante violence, justice, investigation, localism, southern womanhood, honor, isolationism, bigotry, civil rights movement

SURPRISED BY EMMETT TILL
The heart of the project asks students to respond to nine surprises—nine events connected to the Till murder that surprised the people closest to the investigation. In moments of surprise, the people in and around the Emmett Till trial tended to show their true colors. They fell off script, as it were, and revealed with particular clarity the inputs that shaped their convictions about race, class, government. This makes a focus on surprises a particularly insightful way to learn the story of Emmett Till.

By inserting students into the roles of those who will be surprised, it will force them to dig deep into their character. They will not be able to excel simply by memorizing a set of inputs or political commitments that shaped the lives and beliefs of those they are standing in for. Rather, they will need to put these commitments to use—deploy them—in situations for which there is no script.

Surprises:

1. Emmett Till has been killed!
2. Everybody's in Mississippi!
3. Ridicule and lies from the north!
4. It's a lynching!
5. An oversized venire!
6. Did the murder really start in Money?
7. Was Emmett Till killed in Sunflower County?
8. Emmett Till is alive!
9. Emmett Till has been forgotten!

The trial of the Till murderers brought together an incredibly eclectic group of people. None of the above events would have surprised everyone, but all of them would have surprised at least some of the primary actors.

A note on the chronology of surprises. They are listed above in rough chronological order. However, the emphasis is on thematic coherence rather than historical lineage. Some of the events (e.g. rumors that Till was still alive or debates over lynching) occurred at different points throughout the trial. For this reason the surprises can be re-ordered to accommodate the particular objectives of the instructor. Surprises 1 and 2 are designed as "introductions" and are essential to the remainder. Surprise 9 is designed as a debriefing and conclusion.

Surprises 3-8 are the core of the simulation, and it is from these that the students will learn the most about race, the Till trial, and working with archival documents. Because they function well as stand-alone units, they can be reordered (or skipped entirely) without compromising the simulation.

CHARACTERS

The project provides 11 characters that the students may choose between. The characters are designed as *demographic types* rather than individual people. For example, the "jurors" character is built from a general survey of the 13 jurors that worked the Till case. The character provided is a "composite character." It allows students to dig into the backgrounds, beliefs, and commitments *not* of particular jurors, but rather of a segment of the population (a *type*) from which the venire was populated.

Although certain characters have individual names, these too are types. For example, if a student assumes the character of Willie Reed (an eyewitness to the murder), they will learn less about the Willie Reed the individual person and more about Reed as a sharecropper and an eyewitness. For it was Reed's experience working the fields in an economically precarious situation that shaped his response to the Till trial.

In the list of characters below, I explain the type for which each character is a surrogate.

The characters can be divided into two "teams" of five characters each: the prosecution and the defense. As team names, these labels refer not simply to the lawyers, but to the wide swath of people who were invested in securing either a conviction or an acquittal. The only character not on one of these teams is the jurors, who, as jurors, can have no investment one way or the other.

The Prosecution (those characters seeking a conviction)

1. The prosecuting lawyers. Sometimes referred to simply as "the state," since charges were brought by state of Mississippi (as plaintiff). Historically speaking, there were three lawyers for the state: Gerald Chatham, District Attorney, Robert Smith III, special assistant to the DA, and Hamilton Caldwell, County Attorney. All were appointed.

   I use the character of the prosecuting lawyers to think about the racial commitments of the white planter class (the upper class in the Delta). As members of that class, they found themselves in a delicate position: they were asked to prosecute a murder that was an organic expression of the very society in which they thrived.

2. Mamie Bradley. Mrs. Bradly was the mother of Emmett Till. More than anything else, the great migration shaped her response to her son's murder and the trial of his killers. She had moved north to Chicago and, when her son was killed on a vacation to Mississippi, it cast the differences between north and south in bold relief. This character uses the great migration to think through the meaning of the south, Mississippi, and the differences between them.

3. The black press. More than a reporting organ, the black press was an investigative unit. Indeed, they were the most effective such unit on the ground in 1955.

4. Medgar Evers. In 1955, Medgar Evers was living in Jackson, MS, a brand new field secretary for the NAACP. Investigating the Till homicide was one of his first assignments. This character explores how the pursuit of justice was shaped by the fear of vigilante violence.

5. Willie Reed, an eyewitness to the murder. Bearing legal witness to the murder of Emmett Till changed the life of Willie Reed in dramatic ways. Never again would he serve as a sharecropper in rural Mississippi, and never again would he enjoy the privilege of an untraumatized life. This character explores the tensions of witnessing white violence from the fragile position as a Mississippi sharecropper.

The Defense (those characters seeking an acquittal)

6. The defense lawyers. Like the prosecution, these men were drawn from the Delta's planter class. Unlike these men, they accepted the appointment by choice and for a wide range of reasons (very few of which had to do with the murder of Emmett Till). Historically speaking, there were five defense lawyers (every lawyer in Sumner): J. J. Breland, John Whitten, Jr., Sidney Carlton, J. W. Kellum, and Harvey Henderson. Collectively I use this "character" to explore the strong feelings of localism (and the fear of outsiders) that motivated much of the 1950s racism.

7. Carolyn Bryant. Mrs. Bryant was the object of Till's "wolf whistle" and the white woman at the heart of the Till murder. I use her character to explore notions of female beauty, of male honor, and of the myth of the black-rapist, all of which conspired towards the acquittal of Till's murderers.

8. Sheriff H. C. Strider. The Sheriff was Tallahatchie County's local version of Bull Connor—a conspicuous bigot whose racism has been replayed by newsreels for sixty years. I use the Sheriff to explain how bigotry intersected with larger issues of isolationism and autonomy.

9. The white press. The Till trial was a media sensation and reporters from the world over flocked to the tiny town of Sumner, MS. For this "character," I focus mostly on the white papers from the deep south. These journalists tended to focus on a wide range of issues rather than the fact of the murder. The talked endlessly about rape, about school equality, about miscegenation, about voting rights, and about southern autonomy—about anything except the fact that boy was killed for whistling at a woman.

10. The murderers. The murderers were poor whites. In the derogatory term of the day, they were referred to as "peckerwoods." While there was often vitriolic animosity between rich and poor whites, sometimes (as in the case of the Till murder) racial politics could paper over the deep-seated divisions. I use the "character" of the murderers to pull back the paper and explore how poverty and race mingled in the Till trial.

The Jury

11. The jury was also drawn from a predominantly working class, poor, white population. Although they were ostensibly neutral, they shared a lot in common with the murderers. Much like the murderers, I use the jury to explore the intersection of race, class, and economy.

Because each character is written as a type, more than one student may assume the role of any given character. This is particularly true of characters such as the press, the lawyers, or the jurors—there were dozens of newsman, nearly a dozen lawyers, and, of course, 13 jurors. However, even though there was only one Willie Reed and one Mamie Bradly, because these characters were written as types, more than one student could assume these roles too.

RUNNING THE SIMULATION

I strongly suggest opening the simulation with surprises 1 and 2 and ending the simulation with surprise 9. The remaining 6 surprises function well as stand-alone units. There is no repetition, so they can all be used. Or, if time is an issue, not all surprises need to be used.

Throughout the simulation, it is important not to be distracted by history. In any given exercise, the primary objective will never be to figure out what happened, historically speaking. By this time, we know what happened to Emmett Till. We know who was racist, where Till was killed, who he whistled at, etc. Everything that once surprised the original actors have been settled—or largely so.

By staging the various events as "surprises," the intention is not that the students figure out what really happened. Rather, in every exercise, the point is that the students respond to the surprise with the resources provided. Can the student think from the perspective of the character, take into account the beliefs and convictions that shape the characters response?

CHARACTERS:

TITLE: Prosecuting/State Lawyers

KEY TERMS

Paternalism
Planter class
Peckerwoods

TEAM: The Prosecution

BIO

The prosecution was composed of three white men from the planter class who were obliged to prosecute the murderers. Although they were likely committed to white supremacy, the nuances of Mississippi racial politics allowed them to prosecute the murderers with skill and vigor.

BACKGROUND

Unlike the five defense attorneys in the Emmett Till trial, each of whom had a choice as to whether or not they would defend the clients, the three prosecuting attorneys were obligated to work the trial as part of their jobs. The prosecution was led by District Attorney Gerald Chatham. Due to Chatham's failing health (he was on the brink of retirement), the state appointed former FBI agent Robert Smith to assist him. Finally, the prosecution was rounded out by J. Hamilton Caldwell, the County Attorney for Tallahatchie County.

The prosecuting lawyers found themselves in a delicate position. On the one hand, they were professionally obliged to prosecute two white men indicted in the murder of a black boy. On the other hand, they were well-integrated members of the local community—and the local community seemed uninterested in prosecution. So delicate was their position that Robert Smith's wife feared for the safety of her husband! The ambivalence and precarity of these men's position was perfectly illustrated by Hamilton Caldwell, who argued *against* the indictment of the two murderers. Caldwell—the man assigned to prosecute the murderers—was so convinced that a conviction of white men for the murder of a black boy would be impossible to secure with Tallahatchie County jurors, that he didn't even think the murderers should be brought to trial.

Complicating the position of the prosecution further is the fact that all three lawyers were part of the Delta's white upper class, known locally as "planters." By 1955, the term "planter" no longer referred only to the wealthy plantation managers who oversaw the production of cotton—the once-great engine of wealth in the region. Although the term "planter" originated on the plantation, by the mid 20C, the term had come to designate the white upper class more generally, regardless of whether or not anything was actually planted.

As a class, the planters distinguished themselves from both the poor whites and the blacks. The racial attitude of planters is complex. They fancied themselves to be a progressive lot who, if they didn't support racial equality, they also took care of the blacks in their midst (often because they depended on them for labor). Racially speaking, planters often distinguished themselves from poor whites, who were (they believed) far more likely to lynch blacks, to engage in overt violence, and to maintain white supremacy by threat of terror.

Scholars now recognized the racism of Delta Planters as *paternalism*, the planter's belief that their own racial superiority required kindness on their part toward the less fortunate. At the heart of paternalism is the ability to think of oneself as racially tolerant while remaining fully committed to white supremacy. The lynchpin of this otherwise contradictory set of beliefs was that fact that paternalism required only *individual* acts of kindness. "The problem was," James Cobb writes, "that individual whites were normally satisfied that they had fulfilled their obligation to blacks by simply treating fairly those with whom they dealt personally." Thus planters could (and did) fight to maintain systems of white supremacy all while boasting of the fairness with which they treated their laborers.

The classic story of paternalism belongs to William Alexander Percy. In his *Lanterns on the Levee*, Percy dedicated an entire chapter to the plight of the Delta's black laborers in the devastating flood of 1927. Planters, he reported, were quick to provide food and medical supplies to the African-Americans trapped on the levee. In the midst of the crisis, planters worked at food kitchens, conveyed women and children around on boats, and even built latrines. But, out of fear that the black laborers would not return, the planters did not allow their workforce to be evacuated. The *paternalism* of the planters required both individual acts of kindness and resistance to systematic reform. They ensured the blacks were well fed, but left them on the levee. It is a "delicate" problem, planter David Cohn wrote, "to raise the Negro's standards in every phase of life without disturbing the equilibrium of racial relations, and the *status quo* of the white man's dominance."

The prosecuting lawyers no doubt brought this attitude to the trial. They were no advocates of racial equality, but neither would they condone violence against those less fortunate. To their minds, it would have been no surprise that the violence was committed by poor whites--peckerwoods! Their paternalism could allow them to honestly condemn the murderers—but condemn them not for buttressing white supremacy (which the prosecution shared with them), but for their tactics (such violence could not be condoned; if it was, blacks would leave and the planters would find themselves without the labor they needed).

Despite the delicacy of their positions, history has judged the prosecuting attorney's kindly. By and large, they performed their obligations with aplomb. Even a black press which was prone to see systematic distortions of justice in every corner of the southern legal system judged the prosecuting lawyers meritoriously. The NAACP praised the legal team for the "skill and vigor." Chatham's closing arguments brought tears to the eyes of blacks and whites alike. Much like Mrs. Bradley, Chatham used his closing remarks to emphasize the youth of Emmett Till. If he had done something wrong, Chatham insisted, give him a "little beating" as you would your own child. "You deal with a child as a child—not as if he is a man." Although he didn't make it explicit, these remarks were surely intended to extract the murder from the narrative of the black rapist. Chatham knew that the jury would never convict their white peers for killing a sexual predator, so he, like Mamie, emphasized the youth of Emmett Till: "you deal with a child as a child."

Note on the sources: the primary documents will give you a sense of the trial (and the legal context these men encountered). The secondary documents will give you a good sense of paternalism, and the larger racial context.

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TITLE: Carolyn Bryant

KEY TERMS:

Myth of southern womanhood
Honor
Myth of black hyper-sexuality

TEAM: The Defense

BIO

Carolyn Bryant was the 21-year old wife of Roy Bryant and the woman at whom Emmett Till whistled. Her beauty gave the defense lawyers all the ammunition they needed.

BACKGROUND

Carolyn Bryant was the wife of Roy Bryant and the woman at whom Emmett Till whistled. The Bryants managed (and lived in) a small country store in the tiny hamlet of Money, Mississippi, Bryant's Grocery & Meat Market. This was the store on which Emmett and his cousins descended on the evening of August 24, 1955.

While his cousins were occupied on the front porch, Emmett entered Bryant's Grocery. For a few moments, he was alone with Carolyn Bryant inside the store. After his cousin retrieved him, and he was once again on the front porch, Emmett whistled at Carolyn Bryant. The whistle has become an icon in its own right, but it was the time Emmett spent inside the store that would prove far more important. These few minutes in the store—and the fact that they were unseen by

anybody except Carolyn—would prove to be *critical* in the case to acquit the murderers.

To understand the importance of these few minutes, it is necessary to understand a cluster of issues surrounding the myth of southern womanhood.

Carolyn was beautiful by the reigning standards of the day. She was a two-time beauty-contest winner and, at 21-years-old, 5' and 2" tall, and 103 pounds, journalist William Bradford Huie called her the "prettiest woman I've ever seen in my life."

Huie was not an unbiased observer. He desperately wanted to write about the murder for *Look* magazine, but could not do so unless he had access to the killers. To gain such access, he had to befriend their lawyers who, as a matter of strategy, were firmly committed to the beauty of Carolyn Bryant.

Indeed, the beauty of Carolyn Bryant was the lynchpin of the legal defense strategy. If Carolyn could be portrayed as a personification of southern womanhood (beautiful and pure), and if Emmett Till could be portrayed as a sexual predator, it would be an open-and-closed case of "justifiable homicide": the murder of a black man justified by the threat he posed to a white woman.

Although the legal defense team did make other arguments, the acquittal was driven by the beauty of Carolyn Bryant, the so-called hypersexuality of black men, and the imperatives of

masculine honor that obliged white men to "protect" white women, even at the cost of murder. Indeed, in 1963, nine of the twelve jurors confided to historian Stephen Whitaker that they voted to acquit the Till murderers not because they believed the men were innocent (they did not) and not because they doubted the identity of the body (the open argument of the defense), but rather because of what happened at Bryant's Grocery. "The simple fact was that a Negro had insulted a white woman. Her husband would not be prosecuted for killing him."

Perhaps the easiest way to see the development of this strategy is to look at the various statements Carolyn made about Emmett Till. Her first recorded statement came nine days after the murder, on Sept. 2, 1955. On that day, she described Till as "boy" who entered the store to buy candy. While paying, Till grabbed her hand and said "how about a date." Twenty days later, the story changed dramatically. Testifying in court, Carolyn claimed that Till was a "negro man" who put his arms around her hips and propositioned her with "unprintable words."

Why did the story change between September 2 and September 21? The answer, most likely, goes back to the defense lawyers. On September 18, the day before the trial, lawyer Sidney Carlton gave an impromptu interview to reporters at a gathering at the home of Moses Wright. Carlton announced that the most damning part of the defense's case: Bryant would testify in court that "Till mauled and attempted a physical attack while making indecent proposals." Thus did the unseen minutes in the grocery store move to the center of the trial

It is important to note that Carolyn never made such accusations until *after* she met with her attorneys. This suggests that her testimony was *not* a statement of facts as much as it was the expression of a legal strategy. The defense lawyers knew full well the power of interracial sex. If black man so much as looked at a white woman in the wrong manner, southern white men would consider the murder of such a man as a point of honor.

As historian W. J. Cash has observed, a southern white woman was more likely to be hit lightning than to be raped by black man. These facts notwithstanding, the ostensible protection of white-women from the imagined menace of black sex became an all-consuming passion. "I verily believe," he intoned, that "the ranks of the Confederacy went rolling into battle in the misty conviction that it was wholly for her [southern woman] that they fought."

Regardless of why the Confederacy fought their battles, we know for a fact why the jury in the Till trial fought theirs. At least nine of them acquitted the murderers because the crime was committed in the name of protecting the vulnerable Carolyn Bryant.

In 2008, Carolyn admitted to historian Tim Tyson that she lied in court, suggesting that her first narrative, the story a candy-buying boy, is the most accurate tale. It is a heartbreaking admission, as it makes explicit what scholars have long known: the "most damning" part of the defense's case, their suggestion that Till's murder was "justifiable homicide," was little more than a fiction designed to play on the over-charged fears of black sex and let murderers off the hook.

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TITLE: Defense Lawyers

KEY TERMS

Isolationism
Autonomy
Honor
Sex
Southern White Womanhood

TEAM: Defense

BIO

The entire Sumner bar rallied to the defense of J. W. Milam and Roy Bryant. At stake for the group of five elite lawyers was the autonomy of the south and the sanctity of white women.

BACKGROUND

The town of Sumner, MS had five lawyers. All of them defended murderers J. W. Milam and Roy Bryant.

This was not always to be the case. In the immediate aftermath of the murder, the elite planter class of Sumner and, more broadly, Mississippi, inveighed against the murder. Robert Patterson, founder of the white-supremacist Citizens' Councils minced no words condemning the murder. Even more surprising, the virulently racist *Jackson Daily News* called the murder a "brutal, senseless crime" that "merits not one iota of sympathy for the killers." The people of Mississippi, the paper continued, "deplore this evil act." In this atmosphere, murderers J. W. Milam and Roy Bryant were unable to secure legal representation. There was no lawyer in town willing to defend the perpetrators of so heinous a crime.

And then things changed. The NAACP and the black press turned the Till murder into a referendum on the cultural mores of Mississippi. Executive Secretary Roy Wilkins wrote in *The Crisis* (the magazine of the NAACP), "It would appear that the state of Mississippi has decided to maintain white supremacy by murdering children." If this were not sufficiently provocative, Till's mother Mamie Bradley added to the fray. She called Mississippi a "den of snakes" and suggested that "the entire state of Mississippi is going to pay for this." Although she may have been referring simply to the $3,300 burial fee, her comments were received in the Delta as a threat.

From the perspective of the Delta's elite—and especially its lawyers—the Till case was no longer about the murder of a fourteen-year-old boy. As the comments from the NAACP and Till's mothers suggested, the case was now about the customs of the Delta. Was the Delta in fact a "den of snakes?" Was it, as Wilkins suggested, a "state of jungle fury?" Such questions struck the very nerve center of the Mississippi Delta. They struck at issues of local pride: were the customs of the Delta sustainable? More importantly, they struck at issues of self-sufficiency and autonomy: were the white people of Mississippi able to govern themselves in a civilized manner without outside interference?

In Tallahatchie County, issues of local pride and self-sufficiency were hot-button issues. As the *Atlanta Constitution* put it in a 1962 editorial, the Delta has "its ears closed to any story save its own, with its conviction that it has a God-given right to do as it pleases unshaken by history or events." This isolationism was particularly fierce in Tallahatchie County, which had earned the nickname, the "Freestate of Tallahatchie." As police officer N. Z. Troutt explained, "it's called the 'Freestate' because the people here do just about what they damn well please."

When the Till case became a referendum on the cultural autonomy of Tallahatchie County and the Mississippi Delta, the lawyers jumped into action. While they would not defend the murder itself, when the trial became a mechanism for defending their home ground, they were happy to serve the cause. The same lawyers that once refused to defend the murderers now did so *pro bono* or at cut rates, depending on which account you trust.

Once they agreed to defend the Delta by defending the murderers, the lawyers had a powerful resource on their side: the combined mythologies of the black rapist, the southern white woman, and a demanding code of honor.

The cult of southern womanhood held up the white woman of the south as the guardian of the region's refined culture: a model and guide to matters of virtue, modesty, purity, and decorum. While at least one historian has suggested that southern white men prattled on about the glories of white womanhood to obscure the fact that they were sleeping with black women, it remains the case that the south was enchanted with the myth of the undefiled-and-vulnerable white woman.

Opposite the myth of pure southern womanhood was the myth of the sexually aggressive black male. According to the racially charged rape myth, black men were predisposed to rape white women. While historians now know that interracial sex was far more common between powerful white men and powerless black women, the myths of white, southern womanhood and black rapists precisely reversed the facts. While planters slept with black women at will and without consequence, there was a widespread fear that black men were defiling pure blood lines with their uncontrollable urges. The fear that black men would rape white women, historian W. J. Cash writes, "was a menace requiring the most desperate measure if it was to be held off."

The final component of this deadly mythology was a strict code of honor, whereby southern men believed themselves the last bastion of protection between vulnerable white women and hyper-sexual black men. Violence—and even killing—were legitimated by the overarching demand that the womenfolk must be protected. Sassiness, Cash writes, was enough to seal the fate of a black man and, in the courts, "justifiable homicide" was the legal category applied to the killing of black men who so much as looked askance at a white woman.

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TITLE: Mamie Bradley (Emmett Till's mother)

KEY TERMS

Boyhood
The south
"Planet Mississippi"
The Great Migration
Paternalism
Civil rights movement

TEAM: The Prosecution

BIO

Mamie Bradley was Emmett Till's mother. By insisting that Emmett have open-casket funeral, she changed the course of history. Tens of thousands of people saw Emmett lie in state, a picture of his beaten body was widely circulated, and, as a result, Till's body sparked the civil rights movement.

BACKGROUND

By the time the trial arrived, Mamie Bradley's most important work was done. On September 2, 1955, 17 days before the trial, Till's body arrived at Central Street Station on the south side of Chicago. From the train station, Mamie accompanied the body to the A. A. Rayner funeral home. There, despite protests from Ahmed Rayner, who had promised Mississippi officials he would not open the casket, Mamie had the casket opened and saw, for the first time, the damage wrought on his body.

When Mrs. Bradley saw the body, she famously insisted on an open-casket funeral. "Let the people see what they did to my boy," she famously said. They did. Tens of thousands of

Chicagoans saw the damaged body, among them David Jackson, a photographer for Johnson Publications. His photograph of Till's body would change the course of history. Published in the September 15 issue of *Jet* and reprinted in the *Chicago Defender* and *Pittsburgh Courier,* the photograph inspired what historian Charles Payne called the "Till generation"—the generation of activists who came to the fore in the 1960s but who were moved to action by the 1955 photograph. In a way that nothing else could, Jackson's photograph of Till's beaten body captured the sheer violence visited on the body—and especially the face—of Emmett Till.
Although the brutality of the picture is difficult to describe, the words of John Edgar Wideman come close. He described a face "crushed, chewed, [and] mutilated." A face "with all the boy, all the human being battered out of it."

The photograph circulated widely. Delta activist Amzie Moore claimed that the photograph made Till's murder "the best advertised lynching I had ever heard." As recently as 2016, *Time* magazine called it "the photo that changed the civil rights movement."

By the time the trial began on September 19, 1955, Bradley had already done her most consequential work (opening the casket). By opening the casket, she ensured that Emmett's

death was not in vain. She had a strong desire to use the brutal murder of her son for good. She used it to spark the civil rights movement.

When Mrs. Bradley arrived at the Sumner Courthouse at 9am on the second day of the trial, her arrival caused quite a commotion! She was immediately surrounded by reporters and, after the sensation subsided, forced to sit at a card table wedged into the front corner of the courtroom and reserved for the black press.

The single most important fact shaping Mamie Bradley's conception of race was the great migration. Although she was born in Webb, Mississippi, less than three miles from where the Emmett Till trial would eventually be held, she moved to Chicago with her mother in January of 1924. She was only two years old when she left Mississippi, one of the million black southerners who lit out for Chicago in the 1920s alone.

To Mamie Bradley, Mississippi was more of an idea than an actual place. It was a place that couldn't be more different than Chicago. She referred to it as "Planet Mississippi," as though it was its own world. Although Chicago was no racial paradise by any standard (it was called "Little Mississippi" for a reason!), Mrs. Bradley tended to emphasize the different racial attitudes between the two places. Compared to the stifling oppression of Mississippi racism, Chicago was "a place of open arms and open doors."

From Mrs. Bradley's perspective, the key to understanding race relations was the Mason-Dixon line: the south had a more severe form of racism than the north.

This was very different from the racial imagination of those who lived in Tallahatchie County, Mississippi. For those in the heart of the deep south, the key to understanding race was not the Mason-Dixon line, but rather the line that separated the Delta from the Hills. Both regions of Tallahatchie County were racist, but racism took different forms in different portions of the county. The Delta was marked by paternalism (a superficial commitment to interpersonal kindness combined with a strong commitment to white supremacy) while the hills was marked by a more caustic, more violent racism. White planters in the Delta often spoke as if lynching was a phenomenon confined to the hill portion of the county (which was not true).

Thus, when Mamie Bradley claimed that the "state of Mississippi is going to pay for this," the planters of Tallahatchie County felt misunderstood. The "state" was not guilty of anything, and there were plenty of upstanding citizens in the Delta who also condemned the murder. For those closest to the situation, racism found different expressions in different parts of the state (and even different parts of the county). For the most progressive of locals, the lesson of the Till murder was about *certain forms* of racism practiced by *certain segments* of the state. For Bradley, on the other hand, racism had less nuance: it flourished in Mississippi and was moderated in Chicago.

The other factor shaping Mamie Bradley's experience of the trial was the fact that she was Till's mother. From her perspective, Emmett was *boy*. He was a kid: a jokester, a baseball-playing all-American kid. He did chores and played with his friends. This perspective made it hard for her to believe the stories that framed Till as a threat to Carolyn Bryant. While Carolyn always insisted that Till looked like a *man*—and that he registered in her mind as a sexual predator—Mamie

insisted that he was a boy. For this reason, stories of Till's weight and size came to be racially coded: the white press framed his as taller and heavier than he was. This made him into a man—a black man—who could easily fit into the stereotype of a black predator.

Mrs. Bradley would have none of it. She insisted (falsely) that Till did not even whistle at Carolyn Bryant. She knew Till as a baby. She knew that he once suffered from polio, that polio left him with a permanent stutter, and that, because of this, he was generally shy around adults he did not know. When reports of a whistle reached her ears, she explained that Till struggled to enunciate his words, and what Carolyn (and everyone else) heard as a "wolf whistle" was actually just Till struggling to enunciate his words.

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TITLE: Medgar Evers (NAACP)

KEY TERMS

Safety, violence
Justice
Investigation
Civil rights movement

TEAM: The Prosecution

BIO

Medgar Evers was a civil rights activist and NAACP organizer who discovered eyewitnesses to the Till murder via an under-cover investigation. His role in the murder illustrates the role of civil rights organizations such as the NAACP and how they collaborated with the black press.

BACKGROUND

While Medgar Evers is a well-known civil-rights activist, his role in the Emmett Till trial is a story that has seldom been told.

Evers's civil rights credentials are vast. After graduating from Alcorn Agricultural and Mechanical College (now Alcorn State University), Evers moved to the all-black town of Mound Bayou, Mississippi to work for T. R. M. Howard's Magnolia Mutual Life Insurance Company. It was a providential move. Howard was one of the most prominent activists in Mississippi. In 1951, he had founded the Regional Council of Negro Leadership (RCNL), one of the earliest civil rights organizations to mobilize in Mississippi. In the early 1950s, Howard organized annual civil rights rallies that attracted thousands of people. Perhaps his most influential move, however, was recruiting Medgar Evers to the RCNL and, more broadly, to "the movement."

Working for the RCNL, Evers organized a massive boycott of service stations that did not provide facilities for blacks. Before swimming pools, sidewalks, or lunch-counters became lightning rods of inequality across the south, Evers made gas stations a site where equality was put the test. Thousands of bumper-stickers reading "Don't Buy Gas Where You Can't Use the Rest Room" appeared across the state.

In November of 1954, Evers became the NAACP's first Field Secretary for Mississippi. Although he switched organizations, Evers's primary attachment was to neither the RCNL nor the NAACP. He cared first and foremost about on-the-ground racial equality, and believed all the organizations should work together (or even merge) to pursue a common goal. Given this set of priorities, the infighting among various civil rights organizations weighed heavily on him throughout the 1950s. He had little patience for bureaucracy or organizational politics. He simply wanted to push the country towards freedom.

Although he spent much of his time for the NAACP investigating homicides, the murder of Emmett Till impacted Evers on a deeply personal level. He cried when he heard news of the murder and, at times, became so frustrated with racial inequality, and with the slow, always fractured progress of civil rights organizations, that he just wanted to "get a gun and start

shooting." He never did, of course. He steadfastly pursued nonviolent resistance and, tragically, was assassinated for his efforts on June 12, 1963.

Evers played a key—albeit unsung—role in the Till trial. When he left Jackson to investigate the murder just before the trial, he headed straight for Mound Bayou to the home of his old employer, T. R. M. Howard. At Howard's home, on the night before the trial began, Evers met the black journalist Jimmy Hicks and a certain Frank Young—an eyewitness to the murder. Both Young and Hicks had come to Mound Bayor for safety. Howard had guns and a bodyguard and was able to protect anyone who knew too much about the murder for their own safety.

From Young, Evers learned that Till was killed on the Sturdivant Plantation on Sunflower County. This was earth-shattering news! The trial was about to open in Sumner, on the supposition that Till was killed in Tallahatchie County. By Tuesday morning (the second day of the trial), this information had been conveyed to Judge Swango, and a sudden recess was called. The trial took Tuesday afternoon off, as the lawyers considered the possibility that Till was killed in Sunflower County.

To successfully prosecute the killers, the state's lawyers desperately needed Frank Young and other eyewitnesses from the Sturdivant Plantation to testify. This is where Medgar Evers comes in. Along with his NAACP colleague Ruby Hurley, black journalist Moses Newson, and well-known Mississippi activist Amzie Moore, Evers left Sumner at 12:30 pm (just after the recess was called) to hunt for eyewitnesses. The party stopped briefly in Cleveland, MS to don cotton-picking clothes. When they arrived in Sunflower County, they walked the cotton-fields of the Sturdivant Plantation (under cover as sharecroppers) looking for witnesses. The found a few and left with the assurances that at least two of them would attend a meeting that evening in Mound Bayou and subsequently testify for the prosecution. The most important witnesses they contacted were Frank Young and Willie Reed, both of whom saw J. W. Milam and heard the beating of Till in a barn on the Sturdivant Plantation.

Just after Evers left Sunflower County, the white authorities arrived and spooked the witnesses. As a result, none of the showed up for the Mound Bayou meeting. When the witnesses failed to show up, the black press and the white establishment joined forces in what black newspaperman Simeon Booker later called "Mississippi's first interracial manhunt." Leflore County Sherriff George Smith and three white reporters teamed up with the black press to round up the witnesses that Evers had located. From midnight until three am, this cadre of writers and lawmen divided themselves by race (with whites and blacks in each group) and fanned out across the back roads of Sunflower County. It was a frantic search. "Before you could say Jackie Robinson," Hicks wrote, "cars were moving out in all directions." Booker found himself following Sheriff Smith "in a 70-mile-an-hour chase along dusty backwoods roads" in pursuit of witness Willie Reed. By 3:00 am, the group had contacted a number of Sunflower County witnesses, including Young and Reed. Howard assured the witnesses they would be kept safe (Willie Reed moved in with Howard that night) and promised each of them jobs in Chicago in exchange for their testimony in trial.

In the end, Willie Reed would indeed testify. He was virtually the only person in the course of the entire trial to tell the truth of what happened to Emmett Till. It cost him dearly. He suffered

mental illness on account of the trauma and was forced to flee the state directly after the trial. Despite his traumatic and heroic efforts on behalf of the truth, the jury chose to disbelieve his account of the murder.

As this story makes plain, Ever's was deeply committed to racial justice, and was willing to risk his own safety to secure witnesses and produce the truth of what happened. Much like the black press (with whom he worked closely), Evers was more committed to finding the truth than he was to fighting any larger, philosophical battles. He was, fundamentally, an *investigator*—and a good one. Without the leads provided by Evers and his movement colleagues, the black press never would have been able to locate Willie Reed and the truth may never have been spoken in throughout the whole trial.

The essential role of Evers and his NAACP colleagues Amzie Moore and Ruby Hurley are a good reminder of how the movement worked. Beyond high-profile legal assistance, the NAACP provided on-the-ground help, often by working with the black press. Indeed, in the case of Emmett Till, the black press and the movement activists were both essential parts of the team. Justice required the resources of both an organization that could provide people on the ground and a set of reporters with access to the media. Take just one of these components away and Willie Reed would never have the chance to be the lone voice of truth.

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TITLE: Prosecuting/State Lawyers

KEY TERMS

Paternalism
Planter class
Peckerwoods

TEAM: The Prosecution

BIO

The prosecution was composed of three white men from the planter class who were obliged to prosecute the murderers. Although they were likely committed to white supremacy, the nuances of Mississippi racial politics allowed them to prosecute the murderers with skill and vigor.

BACKGROUND

Unlike the five defense attorneys in the Emmett Till trial, each of whom had a choice as to whether or not they would defend the clients, the three prosecuting attorneys were obligated to work the trial as part of their jobs. The prosecution was led by District Attorney Gerald Chatham. Due to Chatham's failing health (he was on the brink of retirement), the state appointed former FBI agent Robert Smith to assist him. Finally, the prosecution was rounded out by J. Hamilton Caldwell, the County Attorney for Tallahatchie County.

The prosecuting lawyers found themselves in a delicate position. On the one hand, they were professionally obliged to prosecute two white men indicted in the murder of a black boy. On the other hand, they were well-integrated members of the local community—and the local community seemed uninterested in prosecution. So delicate was their position that Robert Smith's wife feared for the safety of her husband! The ambivalence and precarity of these men's position was perfectly illustrated by Hamilton Caldwell, who argued *against* the indictment of the two murderers. Caldwell—the man assigned to prosecute the murderers—was so convinced that a conviction of white men for the murder of a black boy would be impossible to secure with Tallahatchie County jurors, that he didn't even think the murderers should be brought to trial.

Complicating the position of the prosecution further is the fact that all three lawyers were part of the Delta's white upper class, known locally as "planters." By 1955, the term "planter" no longer referred only to the wealthy plantation managers who oversaw the production of cotton—the once-great engine of wealth in the region. Although the term "planter" originated on the plantation, by the mid 20C, the term had come to designate the white upper class more generally, regardless of whether or not anything was actually planted.

As a class, the planters distinguished themselves from both the poor whites and the blacks. The racial attitude of planters is complex. They fancied themselves to be a progressive lot who, if they didn't support racial equality, they also took care of the blacks in their midst (often because they depended on them for labor). Racially speaking, planters often distinguished themselves from poor whites, who were (they believed) far more likely to lynch blacks, to engage in overt violence, and to maintain white supremacy by threat of terror.

Scholars now recognized the racism of Delta Planters as *paternalism*, the planter's belief that their own racial superiority required kindness on their part toward the less fortunate. At the heart of paternalism is the ability to think of oneself as racially tolerant while remaining fully committed to white supremacy. The lynchpin of this otherwise contradictory set of beliefs was that fact that paternalism required only *individual* acts of kindness. "The problem was," James Cobb writes, "that individual whites were normally satisfied that they had fulfilled their obligation to blacks by simply treating fairly those with whom they dealt personally." Thus planters could (and did) fight to maintain systems of white supremacy all while boasting of the fairness with which they treated their laborers.

The classic story of paternalism belongs to William Alexander Percy. In his *Lanterns on the Levee*, Percy dedicated an entire chapter to the plight of the Delta's black laborers in the devastating flood of 1927. Planters, he reported, were quick to provide food and medical supplies to the African-Americans trapped on the levee. In the midst of the crisis, planters worked at food kitchens, conveyed women and children around on boats, and even built latrines. But, out of fear that the black laborers would not return, the planters did not allow their workforce to be evacuated. The *paternalism* of the planters required both individual acts of kindness and resistance to systematic reform. They ensured the blacks were well fed, but left them on the levee. It is a "delicate" problem, planter David Cohn wrote, "to raise the Negro's standards in every phase of life without disturbing the equilibrium of racial relations, and the *status quo* of the white man's dominance."

The prosecuting lawyers no doubt brought this attitude to the trial. They were no advocates of racial equality, but neither would they condone violence against those less fortunate. To their minds, it would have been no surprise that the violence was committed by poor whites--peckerwoods! Their paternalism could allow them to honestly condemn the murderers—but condemn them not for buttressing white supremacy (which the prosecution shared with them), but for their tactics (such violence could not be condoned; if it was, blacks would leave and the planters would find themselves without the labor they needed).

Despite the delicacy of their positions, history has judged the prosecuting attorney's kindly. By and large, they performed their obligations with aplomb. Even a black press which was prone to see systematic distortions of justice in every corner of the southern legal system judged the prosecuting lawyers meritoriously. The NAACP praised the legal team for the "skill and vigor." Chatham's closing arguments brought tears to the eyes of blacks and whites alike. Much like Mrs. Bradley, Chatham used his closing remarks to emphasize the youth of Emmett Till. If he had done something wrong, Chatham insisted, give him a "little beating" as you would your own child. "You deal with a child as a child—not as if he is a man." Although he didn't make it explicit, these remarks were surely intended to extract the murder from the narrative of the black rapist. Chatham knew that the jury would never convict their white peers for killing a sexual predator, so he, like Mamie, emphasized the youth of Emmett Till: "you deal with a child as a child."

Note on the sources: the primary documents will give you a sense of the trial (and the legal context these men encountered). The secondary documents will give you a good sense of paternalism, and the larger racial context.

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TITLE: Henry Clarence Strider, Tallahatchie County Sherriff

KEY TERMS

Isolationism
Autonomy

TEAM: Defense

BIO

Sheriff Henry Clarence (H. C.) Strider played a key role in the Till trial. While he is known for his bigotry, his racism was deeply intertwined with lethal forms of localism and isolationism.

BACKGROUND

During the Emmett Till trial, Sheriff Henry Clarence (H. C.) Strider earned a national reputation as the "anointed defender of the unreconstructed south." He greeted the black press each morning with derisive racial slurs, he booked witnesses in a distant jail under false names to prevent them from testifying, he accused the NAACP of plotting the Till murder for propaganda purposes, and he ultimately lied on the witness stand to secure the freedom of Till's killers. No fire hoses or nightsticks are needed to round out the caricature of Strider as an embodiment of southern bigotry. He was Tallahatchie County's Bull Connor.

From Strider's perspective, the deep south was under siege. Virtually every Emmett Till

documentary replays a grainy video of Strider's racist defense of local mores: "We never have any trouble until some of our Southern niggers go up North and NAACP talks to 'em and they come back home. If they would keep their nose and mouths out of our business we would be able to do more when enforcing the laws of Tallahatchie County and Mississippi." From Strider's perspective, the Till murder offered a clear example of what happens when outsiders (northerners) meddle in a culture they do not understand. If everyone would simply mind their own business, he seemed to suggest, the murders would cease and Tallahatchie County would regain an unequal-but-peaceful equilibrium.

Just as Mamie Bradley approached race via the Mason-Dixon line, so also did Strider. While Bradley believed that racism thrived on southern side of the line, Strider argued that the capacity of the south to maintain the peace required a strong localism: keep northern influences out! Bradley was hostile to the south and Strider to the north; for both thinkers, racial culture shifted at the border where the south and the north.

Strider was hardly alone in his isolationism. As a region, the Mississippi Delta is known as the "deepest of the deep south," and it marches to its own drum. As the *Atlanta Constitution* put it in a 1962 editorial, the Delta has "its ears closed to any story save its own, with its conviction that it has a God-given right to do as it pleases unshaken by history or events." This isolationism was particularly fierce in Tallahatchie County, which had earned the nickname, the "freestate of Tallahatchie." As police officer N. Z. Troutt explained, "it's called the 'Freestate' because the people here do just about what they damn well please."

While Strider used racial slurs to safeguard the autonomy of the Delta, the "Freestaters" did have articulate and so-called "respectable" defenders. Those such as the journalist James Kilpatrick framed southern autonomy as a form of old-fashioned political *conservatism*. The preservation of western civilization, he argued, required the preservation of the racial arrangements that had, theretofore, made such a civilization possible.

For a people who liked to do as they pleased, the mid-1950s offered plenty of reasons for anxiety. On May 17, 1954, northern interference in southern customs was demanded by the highest court in the land. From the perspective of Tallahatchie County, *Brown v. Board* was not, first and foremost, about the integration of schools. Rather, the landmark Supreme Court decision registered primarily as a usurpation of local authority over local customs.

For the white residents of Tallahatchie County, this usurpation got personal in the month between Till's murder and the beginning of the trial. The NAACP attacked the "state of jungle fury" in the Delta and newspapers across the country decried the murder and the region. "It would appear that the state of Mississippi," NAACP executive secretary Roy Wilkins wrote, "has decided to maintain white supremacy by murdering children."

In sum, for Strider and other Freestaters, racism was deeply entangled with issues of isolationism and autonomy. It was their strong sense that their autonomy was under siege that gave way to some of the most racist expressions of the entire Till trial, like Strider's rant about the NAACP.

The best way to stress the entanglement of autonomy, isolationism, and racism is to look at one example in which Sheriff Strider was surprisingly open to outside influence. Strider was not only the County Sherriff, he also farmed 1,500 acres of Tallahatchie County land with the assistance of thirty-five African-American sharecroppers. If Tallahatchie County was truly as isolated as he suggested—if it could get along without northern interference—then his cotton would have left him none the richer. Cotton was "the first complex global business" and, while New York City may have been home to the NAACP, it was also the end-point of forty-percent of cotton revenue. Without ports in New Orleans, markets in New York City, or factories in Liverpool, Strider's farm never would have turned a profit.

The so-called isolationism of the Delta, then, never had a basis in fact; it was always little more than a reactionary mechanism designed to stay the forces of cultural change, especially when those forces upset the racial norms on which the southern aristocracy depended. And, as the thirty-five black families that farmed Strider's land remind us, no one benefited from the global markets or local racial norms more than the sheriff himself. For Strider, isolationism was a mechanism to prop up white supremacy and, in the case of Emmett Till, secure an acquittal for the killers.

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TITLE: The Black Press

KEY TERMS

Safety
Justice
Investigation

TEAM: The Prosecution

BIO

The men and women who formed the black press corps were on the hunt for facts and justice. They knew that the truth would not be told without them, and they gave themselves with zeal to investigation, justice, and truth at great risk to their own safety.

BACKGROUND

Life was not easy as a member of the black press corps covering the Emmett Till trial. They were confined to a cramped card table in the corner of the courtroom, they were forced to lodge well outside of town, they were subject to daily racial slurs from Sheriff Strider, and the phones by which they reported their stories were widely believed to be tapped. Things were so bad that one black reporter—James (Jimmy) Hicks—formulated a plan to jump out of a second story window if things got out of hand in the courtroom.

Because members of the black press feared for their safety, they refused to file their most ambitious, most honest, and most groundbreaking stories while they were in Sumner—the small town in the rural Mississippi Delta where the trial was being held. It was not until October of 1956, after the black press retreated to the safety of the urban north, that they began to publish their own accounts of the murder and trial. While Hicks regretted not filing his stories in real time, to the end of his life he remained convinced that his decision to not file his stories ended up saving his life.

Despite the challenges of serving in such a role, the black press corps in Sumner was people with remarkable men and women from across the nation. Jimmy Hicks wrote for the *Afro-American,* and his stories were syndicated in Pittsburgh, Atlanta, and Baltimore. Clotye Murdock was the only woman on the corps. She came from Chicago with photographer David Jackson (who

would eventually publish the famous picture of Till's beaten body) and Simeon Booker (who was fresh out of Harvard's prestigious Neiman Fellows program). L. Alex Wilson came from Memphis and was a writer for the *Tri-State Defender*. Although Olive Arnold Adams was not technically a reporter (she was the wife of T. R. M. Howard) she wrote an influential retrospective on the murder called "Time Bomb," and her account of the case closely resembles that compiled by the black press.

Unsurprisingly, the black press corps was slow to trust the news being disseminated via official channels. Far more than the white journalists, the black press corps were *investigative* reporters. Jimmy Hicks went undercover at a local juke joint, Booker donned "sharecropping clothes" and walked the cotton fields looking for witnesses, Murdock wrote an influential piece on Delta culture, and the entire corps thought constantly about their own safety. Many of them lodged in

Mound Bayou, Mississippi at the home of civil rights activist T. R. M. Howard. Although Howard lived some thirty miles from Sumner, and although the distance was an inconvenience, he offered something the black press dearly needed: safety. He stashed guns in every corner of his house and moved through the state with a bodyguard.

Without question, the greatest accomplishment of the investigative reporting carried out by the black press was the identification of the murder site (Sturdivant Plantation in Sunflower County) and their ability to secure eye-witnesses to the murder, three of whom testified in court (Willie Reed, Add Reed, and Mandy Bradley).

Historically speaking, it is a shame that the news of eyewitnesses in Sunflower County was first published in the Memphis *Commercial Appeal*, a white paper. The only reason the story of Sunflower County was first reported by the white press is that the black journalists had no safe way to call in their story (they believed their phones were tapped and that any unsanctioned news reports could cost them their life). Because the black press had no way to disseminate their tale, and because they believed their findings needed to be published *post haste*, they made the remarkable decision to *give their scoop* to Clark Porteous of the Memphis *Commercial Appeal* (he did not cite them).

While the white press tended to focus on larger, more abstract issues such as the myth of southern womanhood, the meaning of *Brown vs. Board,* or the imperiled autonomy of the Delta, the black press was far more focused on the particularities of the Till case. They turned up witnesses, rewrote the murder trail, convinced the judge to call a recess on the second day of the trial, found jobs for witnesses in Chicago, and, in general, did whatever they could to see that justice was served.

To read the reports of the black press is to be mired quickly in the details of the case. To read the news reports filed by white reporters, by contrast, is to be confronted with endless meditations on the *meaning of the Till case.* Was this the end of southern autonomy? Were northerners like Till out to marry white women? Were they really just trying to segregate schools? Is the southern way of life at stake?

While the likes of Hicks, Booker, and Murdock certainly had thoughts on these issues, the Till trial was not (for them) a philosophical referendum. It was an investigation into the unlawful death of a 14-year old boy. Undistracted by larger issues, the black press pursued the facts at great personal costs to themselves. From their perspective, the possibility of justice required that the true story of Till's death be told.

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TITLE: Juror

KEY TERMS

Cotton
Delta
Hills
Plantations / Planters
Paternalism

TEAM: Defense

BIO

The white men who populated the jury in the Emmett Till case were drawn from the extreme northwest corner of Tallahatchie County. It was a region known for both racism and economic depression—with each of these factors fueling the other.

BACKGROUND

The jurors in the Emmett Till trial were white men. By Mississippi law, jurors were drawn from the county’s pool of “male citizens,” twenty-one years and older, who were registered to vote. Because not a single African-American was registered to vote in Tallahatchie County in 1955, jury service was limited to the county’s 3000 white men of age.

Most of the jurors in the Emmett Till trial come from “the hills,” the extreme northeast corner of Tallahatchie County—police beat 1. Although the trial in Sumner was only 30 miles *west* of the hills, it may as well have been in a different world. The dividing line between the Delta and the hills—and the two completely different lifeworlds they represented—was the Tallahatchie River.

The Tallahatchie river flows north to south, cutting Tallahatchie County in half. By the late nineteenth century, the river was a boundary marker for the county in several different registers. Topographically, it divided the flat alluvial plains of the Delta (where the trial was held) from the rolling hills of the east (from which the jury hails). Economically, it divided the affluent cotton

kingdom of Delta plantations from the small, poor farms hewed out of the hills. Culturally, it divided the self-styled aristocratic Delta “planters” from the lower-class “farmers” of the hills. Racially, the river has divided two different styles of oppression, the paternalism of the Delta aristocracy and the open racism of the hills.

In the Delta, black labor was the only thing separating the aristocratic planters from the extreme wealth generated by the cotton industry. Known as “white gold,” cotton dominated U. S. exports from 1803 through 1937 and generated staggering amounts of wealth for the greater Mississippi valley. By the time the Civil War arrived, the Mississippi River valley boasted more millionaires per capita than anywhere else in the United States. Although the financial returns of cotton in the Delta had long since peaked by the time Till was killed in the 1950s, there remained a wealthy, white planter class—a class whose wealth hinged on the international market for cotton and a ready supply of cheap, black labor.

None of this wealth made it to the east side of Tallahatchie county, where the contours of the land (it was hilly!) prevented the large-scale growth of cotton. Accordingly, the white residents of the hills were poor, scratching out a living as laborers or small-scale farmers. Of the 13 jurors in the Till trial (including the alternate), ten were small-scale farmers, two were carpenters, and one was an insurance salesman. All were poor, and all felt keenly the scarcity of labor and the competition with blacks.

The white planters of the Delta were keenly aware of their dependence on black labor and on the propensity of black laborers to migrate north in search of better lives. Accordingly, Delta planters fancied themselves to be less racist than the poor white farmers of the hills. In the hills, where the undulating contours of the land prevented the large-scale growth of cotton, blacks were a form of economic competition (and not the key to wealth). Unsurprisingly, racism took its most caustic form in the hills. The KKK thrived in the hill country of Mississippi and, according to the planters, lynching was a hill-country phenomenon.

None of this should suggest that the white Delta planters were not racist. They too were deeply committed to white supremacy, if for different reasons. Indeed, careful historical study reveals that lynchings were not less common in the Delta, they were simply calibrated to the growth of cotton. Delta lynchings (like Till's) tended to happen in the summer months, when the cotton was "laid by" and the demand for labor was at a seasonal low.

Scholars now recognized the racism of Delta Planters as *paternalism*, the planter's belief that their own racial superiority required kindness on their part toward the less fortunate. At the heart of paternalism is the ability to think of oneself as racially tolerant while remaining fully committed to white supremacy. The lynchpin of this otherwise contradictory set of beliefs was that fact that paternalism required only *individual* acts of kindness. "The problem was," James Cobb writes, "that individual whites were normally satisfied that they had fulfilled their obligation to blacks by simply treating fairly those with whom they dealt personally." Thus planters could (and did) fight to maintain systems of white supremacy all while boasting of the fairness with which they treated their laborers.

The classic story in this regard belongs to William Alexander Percy. In his *Lanterns on the Levee*, Percy dedicated an entire chapter to the plight of the Delta's black laborers in the devastating flood of 1927. Planters, he reported, were quick to provide food and medical supplies to the African-Americans trapped on the levee. In the midst of the crisis, planters worked at food kitchens, conveyed women and children around on boats, and even built latrines. But, out of fear that the black laborers would not return, the planters did not allow their workforce to be evacuated. The *paternalism* of the planters required both individual acts of kindness and resistance to systematic reform. They ensured the blacks were well fed, but left them on the levee. It is a "delicate" problem, planter David Cohn wrote, "to raise the Negro's standards in every phase of life without disturbing the equilibrium of racial relations, and the *status quo* of the white man's dominance."

During jury selection on September 19 and 20, 1955, the prosecution made a critical mistake. Thinking they would be best served by selecting jurors who lived far away (and would thus be less likely to be friends with the accused), the prosecution sought jurors from the extreme

northeast corner of the county—the hills! It was a critical mistake. By selecting poor whites to serve on the jury, the were selecting as jurors the precise demographic most likely to harbor the most virulent racist passions. Unlike the planter class of the Delta, the poor whites (peckerwoods) came from a culture in which racial violence was the norm (and understood as a cultural safeguard).

The defense recognized the mistake immediately, and were only too happy to capitalize on it. Defense lawyer J. J. Breland claimed that "after the jury had been chosen, any first-year law student could have won the case."

PRIMARY DOCUMENTS

Porteous, Clark. "Jury Being Chosen in Till Trial," *Memphis Press-Scimitar* 9/19/55. P. 1, 4.

"Wolf Whistle Jury Panel Will be Selected Today." *Memphis Press-Scimitar*, 9/12/55, p.13.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Anderson, Devery S. *Emmett Till: The Murder that Shocked the World and Propelled the Civil Rights Movement* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2015), 85-122.

Cobb, James C. *The Most Southern Place on Earth: The Mississippi Delta and the Roots of Regional Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), "The Deepest South," 153-183.

Dattel, Gene. *Cotton and Race in the Making of America: The Human Costs of Economic Power* (Lanham, MD: Ivan R. Dee, 2011), 313-347.

Tell, Dave. *Remembering Emmett Till* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), introduction and chapter 2.

Whitaker, Hugh Stephen. "A Case Study in Southern Justice: The Emmett Till Case." Master's thesis, Florida State University (1963), 141 – 146.

TITLE: Willie Reed, eyewitnesses to the murder

KEY TERMS

Safety
Justice
Investigation
Sharecropping

TEAM: The Prosecution

BIO

Eyewitnesses such as Willie Reed were crucial to the emergence of the truth in the Emmett Till trial. Their testimony was made all the more heroic by the fact that all of the eyewitnesses were sharecroppers, the single most vulnerable demographic in the racial economy of 1950s Mississippi.

BACKGROUND

It was neither easy nor safe to be an eye-witness of the Emmett Till murder. Two such witnesses (Henry Lee Loggins and Levi "too tight" Collins) were secretly jailed in Charleston, MS (thirty miles away) under fake names to prevent them from telling their story. Several other eyewitnesses (Moses Wright, Simeon Wright, and Willie Reed) lost their jobs and were forced to leave the state for their own safety.

The story of Willie Reed is exemplary in this regard. Immediately after he heard J. W. Milam and others beat Emmett Till on a remote plantation in Sunflower County, he left his home and his job to live with the legendary civil rights activist T. R. M. Howard. Howard stashed guns in every corner of his house, moved with the protection of a body guard, and promised Reed a job in Chicago if he would stay in the Delta long enough to testify against the white murderers.

Reed agreed to testify, and he was one of the only voices in the entire trial to tell the truth. It cost him dearly. The ordeal was so trying that he ended up in the hospital weeks after leaving Mississippi. He was diagnosed with nervous disorders, ulcers, and suffered nightmares well into the 1980s. Ultimately, he dropped off the radar for decades. Even members of the Till family assumed he was dead (possibly lynched for his role in the trial). It was not until he re-emerged for interviews in 1999 that we have learned just how trying it was to be an eyewitness to the Till murder.

As the story of Reed demonstrates, eyewitnesses were torn between the truth that they witnessed and the stability and safety of their lives as they knew them. A key element of this fragile position is the fact that all eyewitnesses were "sharecroppers"—a form of subsistence farming that left black Americans extremely vulnerable to the whims of white planters.

Sharecropping was an arrangement in which laborers—almost all of whom were black—worked "for an interest in crop rather than cash." Just as their ancestors had done under slavery, the black laborers in the Delta worked the fields of white planters from mid-spring through harvest. At the years end, sharecroppers were, in theory, entitled to a share of the crop. However, because few

laborers could afford food, shelter, or implements with which to farm, planters supplied these goods but, at years end, deducted their value from the shares otherwise due to the "cropper." Because black laborers did not have the education to keep their own accounts, and because disagreements at settlement often resulted in physical violence, there was no way for a laborer to ensure a just compensation. If a planter declared that a cropper's debt exceeded his shares, the laborer had no recourse beyond a commitment to stay on the land, farm another year, and hope for a better settlement. In practice, sharecropping resembled an institutionalized form of debt peonage; it may not have been slavery, but it was a plantation economy all the same. Renowned Black Studies professor Clyde Woods described sharecropping as "a production system organized around institutional starvation, discrimination, violence, fraud, debt, and enforced dependency."

Sharecropping meant that laborers were dependent on planters in numerous registers. Croppers depended on white planters not only for employment, but also for just treatment. They depended on the planters' honest book-keeping, but had no way to enforce it (or even to recognize it). This arrangement produced a culture of extreme, servile deference, to put it mildly. It created a culture where blacks were subservient to whites in every domain of life. Any breach of Jim Crow social codes could cost the cropper his only chance at a fair settlement. For this reason, sharecropping created a system in which complaints against planters circulated privately but seldom publicly. Never would a sharecropper publicly complain against a planter.

In such a context, the possibility of trial testimony was highly charged. The public critique of planters (that testimony required), if it didn't cost a cropper their life, would certainly cost them their jobs. Against this background, two of the real heroes of the Till trial were Willie Reed and Moses Wright. Both of these men testified and both of these men publicly accused J. W. Milam and Roy Bryant of murder. Both fled Mississippi.

PRIMARY DOCUMENTS

Featherston, James. "'Surprise' Witness Describes 'Hollering' in Sunflower Barn." *Jackson Daily News*, 9/22/55, 1, 8.

Dixon, Amos. "Till Case: Torture and Murder." *CA Eagle*. 2/9/56. 1, 2,

Hicks, Jimmy. "Inside Story" of the Till trial ran in 4 installments in three different newspapers: the *Atlanta Daily World*, the *Baltimore Afro-American*, and the *Cleveland Call & Post.* The various stories have been helpfully collected by Christopher Metress, *The Lynching of Emmett Till: A Documentary Narrative* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002), 153-182.

Wilson, L. Alex. "Defender Tracks Down Mystery Till 'Witness.'" *Chicago Defender*. 10/8/55, 1-2.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Whitfield, Stephen J. *A Death in the Delta: The Story of Emmett Till* (Hopkins UP, 1988), 51-69.

Scott, James, C. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (Yale UP, 1990), 1-16.

Tell, Dave. *Remembering Emmett Till* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), chapter 1.

SAMPLE EVENT

SURPRISE #1: Emmett Till has been killed!

It's on the front pages of newspapers across the country: 14-year old Emmett Till has been killed in Mississippi. Although the details are still hazy, at this point it seems like the relevant facts are these: Emmett Till was a 14-year-old boy from Chicago. He was in the heart of the Mississippi Delta on vacation, visiting his cousins. After a long day in the cotton fields, a crew of boys (Till included) skipped out on a midweek church service and made their way to Bryant's Grocery & Meat Market, a small grocery store in the tiny village of Money, MS (population 300).

Till was inside the Grocery alone with Carolyn Bryant, the shopkeeper. No one else was in the store with him, so it is impossible to know what, exactly, happened. Some suspect foul play.
Others insist that Till was an upstanding young man, and nothing indecent could have happened. Regardless, we know that the authorities have arrested two men, Carolyn's husband Roy Bryant and his half-brother J. W. Milam. Before the month is out, they will stand trial in the Tallahatchie County Courthouse in Sumner, MS. It promises to be a massive media event.

WATCH

Please watch one of the following documentaries as an introduction to the case. Both are approximately one-hour long.

Beauchamp, Keith A., prod. *The Untold Story of Emmett Louis Till*. Till Freedom Come. Productions, 2005. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bvijYSJtkQk

Nelson, Stanley, prod. *The Murder of Emmett Till: The Brutal Killing the Mobilized the Civil Rights Movement*. Firelight Media, 2002.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7uTtNnCw69w

INSTRUCTIONS

In response to this news, all characters should post an initial response to the news. These responses need to respect the fundamental ambiguity of the case. The point here is not to nail down (or even advocate for) a particular version of what, precisely, happened to Emmett Till the night he was killed. Instead, please focus your responses on the ideological commitments that, from the perspective of your character, should inform our understanding of the murder. In other words, your "response" to this news is, at heart, an *introduction* to your character: what are the issues that move you, that shape the way you interpret the death of a boy, that shape the way you see race relations.

This will involve reading your background sheet carefully and, critically, using the background to write a response to one of the documentaries listed above. Dig into at least one primary text and two secondary sources (resources of both types are listed on your character sheets). Using these resources in an explicit and well-developed manner, introduce yourself to the rest of the cast!

Surprise 2: Everybody's in Mississippi!

BACKGROUND

Mississippi had never seen anything like the Emmett Till trial! Reporters from Europe mingled with reporters from the New York Times who mingled with reporters from across the south. Daily
was footage flown from Mississippi to each of the major networks. Congressman Charles C. Diggs of Michigan travelled to Mississippi for the occasion, only to be harassed and ridiculed by local white law enforcement.

For many of those in Sumner, MS, the Emmett Till trial was time of cultural introductions. Reporters from the New York Times, for example, had never before covered a trial south of the Mason-Dixon line. People from rural Mississippi who had never met a real, living communist got their chance. Rob Hall covered the trial for the Daily Worker (at least until he was run out of town mid-way through the trial). Reporters for the black press got to meet NAACP officers Medgar Evers and Ruby Hurley and activists from Chicago got to meet activists from Mississippi.

Amongst all the cultural introductions, however, no one could have been quite as surprised (or overwhelmed) as the tiny town of Sumner, MS, population 500. This small but (unusually) prosperous town was the site where the cultural mores of Mississippi met the intense gaze of the international community.

READ

Clotye Murdock, "Land of the Till Murder," Ebony 11, no, 6 (April 1956): 91-96.

This is one of the many "cultural introduction" pieces that ran in newspapers across the country. These sorts of stories were intended to introduce the country to the culture of the Mississippi Delta.

Optional follow-up article. Clotye Murdock Larsson, "Land of the Till Murder Revisited" Ebony 41, no. 5 (March 1986): 53-58.

INSTRUCTIONS

Each character is to research three other characters (see table below for assignments). To research a character, read their bio sheet, one primary document, and one secondary source. As you read, look for sites of overlap with your own character. Such sites might be points of agreement. Or you might find common issues shared by characters of very different persuasion. After you've done your reading and thereby gotten to know some other characters, write a threepage
description of what your relationship to these characters might look like. Identify points of commonality and difference. Note common experiences, or the lenses which might frame an approach to the Till case.

Character Research Assignments

Prosecuting lawyers The jury, Willie Reed, black press

Mamie Bradley (Till's mother) Sheriff, murderer, defense lawyers,

Willie Reed (eyewitness) Medgar Evers, black press, Willie Reed

Medgar Evers (NAACP) Black press, prosecuting lawyers, white press
The black press White press, Medgar Evers, Willie Reed
The defense lawyers Carolyn Bryant, the black press, the jury
The white press black press, defense lawyers, murderers
Murderers The jury, the prosecution, Carolyn Bryant
Carolyn Bryant Defense lawyers, sheriff, white press
Sheriff H. C. Strider defense lawyers, Willie Reed, Mamie Bradley
Jury defense lawyers, murderers, Carolyn Bryant

SURPRISE #3: Ridicule from the North
BACKGROUND
Emmett Till has been dead for a week, but the trial is still a few weeks in the future. The country is just learning what happened, and the response is intense. The most visible response is from the NAACP, whose Executive Secretary Roy Wilkins minced no words:
It would appear from this lynching that the State of Mississippi has decided to maintain white supremacy by murdering children. The killers of the boy felt free to lynch him because there is in the entire state no restraining influence of decency, not in the state capital, among the daily newspapers, the clergy nor any segment of the so-called 'better citizens.'
These were fighting words. In Jackson, Mississippi, the Clarion-Ledger framed Wilkin's comments as a "bitter attack on the State."
Inflaming matters further, Till's mother weighed in with her own incendiary comments. She called Mississippi a "den of snakes"—a place that would murder children without provocation. She claimed that the entire state "will have to pay for this" (see article below).
If the NAACP and others in the north were going to use the Till murder to attack the state (and the entire region), the local community was going to respond in kind, using the Till murder as a chance to defend the autonomy and decency of Mississippi. For most everyone involved, the Till murder took on a mythic, philosophical quality. The case was no longer about the murder of a boy. Rather, it was about the reputation of a region. This would have a decisive impact on the case and those willing to be involved with it. Although many in Mississippi had no tolerance for murder per se, they were quick to defend their home ground, even if that meant rallying to the assistance of murderers.
In the article below, Mississippi Governor Hugh White explained that the reputation of Mississippi was on the line, and it must be defended. For White, this meant a determined prosecution, for others, the defense of the state would come to be entangled with the defense of Till's murderers. In this instance, and as you move through this simulation, pay careful attention to how the death of Emmett Till becomes entangled with a wide variety of other issues.
READ
Please read the two short documents attached below.
INSTRUCTIONS
For this assignment, please work in your teams (jurors, join the defense). Each team has a separate site for discussion. As a team, and working from the perspective of your characters, please discuss the comments made by Roy Wilkins and Mrs. Bradley. Defense team, please mobilize the intellectual commitments of your characters to transform the ridicule into a strategy for defending the murderers. Prosecution team, mobilize the commitments of your characters to talk about how the comments of Wilkins and Bradley might be framed in a manner that will not

hurt your case.
As always, your responses should reflect the ideological investments and personal commitments of your character. The goal—as always—is to interact with the other characters as much as possible from inside the vantage point afforded by your particular character.
"A Brutal Slaying," Delta Democrat-Times, Sept. 4, 1955, 4.
"'A Den of Snakes': Youth's Mother Calls Mississippi,"
Delta-Democrat Times, Sept. 1, 1955,

Surprise #4: Is the Till murder a Lynching?
BACKGROUND
In the lead up to the trial, one of the most hotly debated questions was whether or not the murder counted as a lynching.
In large measure, the debate was sparked by Roy Wilkin's incendiary comments about the state of Mississippi: "The killers of the boy felt free to lynch him because there is in the entire state no restraining influence of decency."
The black newspaper the Tri-State Defender published a picture of Emmett Till, George Lee, and Lamar Smith hanging from a tree branch (see below). While all three were killed by racial violence in 1955 in the Mississippi Delta, none of them were hung from a tree. The point of the cartoon, however, was not to identify the precise means of death. Rather, the cartoon inserted the murders into the long tradition of Mississippi lynching. Although the early 1950s were relatively peaceful, in the 75 years leading up to 1955, 500 African-Americans were lynched in Mississippi alone.
Of these 500 lynchings, most were related in some way to questions of sexuality and fears of black-on-white rape. The connection between lynching and black-on-white rape was made explicit by American writer Thomas Nelson Page. In a 1904 essay called "The Negro: The Southerner's Problem," Page argued that lynching would not cease until the crime of rape, which was "wholly confined to the Negro race," ceased. Page reasoned that black Americans would interpret all talk of equality to mean "sexual license." So long as there were agitators for equality, he predicted, black-on-white rape would increase, and so also would lynching.
Although Page was wrong about the sexual propensities of black men, wrong about the sexual guilt of lynch victims, and wrong about the vulnerability of southern white women (one historian estimates that southern white women had more to fear from random lightning strikes than from black men), he was right about one thing: he captured perfectly the mindset of the white southerner. Despite all evidence to the contrary, Stephen J. Whitfield writes, the irrational and groundless "fear of the black rapist could not be rationalized out of the Delta white man."
By the time Till was murdered, then, it was all too easy to see his murder as a lynching. Hadn't he whistled at a white woman?
If the Till murder was "obviously" a lynching for Wilkins and others, it was certainly not so for all. Unsurprisingly, the Mississippi elite refused to call the murder a lynching. Even when they publicly condemned the murder, they were insistent that it was a murder and not a lynching. A great example is Mississippi Governor Hugh White. "This is not a lynching," he told the Jackson Daily News (perhaps the most racist paper in the state). "It is straight out murder."
While the question of whether or not Till's death was a murder or a lynching might seem like splitting hairs, for those in the Delta there was much at stake. If it was a "straight out murder," as Governor White suggested, then there was no reason for the media presence or the intervention of civil rights organizations. Most importantly, if it was just a murder, there was no reason to

question to the sufficiency of the Mississippi justice system. The courts dealt with murder on a routine basis, and could certainly do so again. If Till's death was a lynching, however, then everything changed. As an extra-legal event, an explicit setting aside of due process, lynching called into question the capacity of Mississippi law enforcement to investigate and Mississippi courts to adjudicate. Lynching was a higher level of lawlessness and, in the eyes of civil rights organizations, demanded both intervention and publicity.

READ

Whitfield, Stephen J. A Death in the Delta: The Story of Emmett Till (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 1-31.

INSTRUCTIONS

Drawing on the convictions of your character, please weigh in on this debate. Was the Till murder a lynching? While you may, if you wish, consult the Dyer Act or other definitions of lynching, your foremost obligation is to answer the question from inside your character. You will be graded on how well—and to what extent—you are able to bring the commitments of your character to bear on the question of lynching. Accordingly, there is no right or wrong answer to this question: it is a chance for you to think from the perspective of your character about an issue they surely would have thought about.

Please make one initial post that states your position and provides reasons. In addition, please comment on the posts of at least three other characters—all from inside the perspective of your character.

Memphis Tri-State Defender,
September 10, 1955.
Hanging from the tree: Reverend
George Lee, Lamar Smith, and,
smaller, the boy Emmett Till.
The NAACP's Roy Wilkins and
the Delta activist T. R. M.
Howard are entering the scene
with their sleeves rolled up

Surprise #5: An over-sized venire!

BACKGROUND

The first day and a half of the five-day trial was consumed with the task of jury selection. When we consider that the court was recessed for a good portion of the second day, it becomes clear just how important the task of jury selection was. The first two days of the trial accomplished nothing but the selection of the jury.

The venire is the total pool of citizens from which the jury is chosen. In this case, it was filled with white men. Mississippi law banned women from serving as jurors. And while the state was theoretically open to black jurors, the venire was drawn from voter registrations and not a single black person was registered to vote in the whole of Tallahatchie County.

If jury selection took a long time, this was partially because lawyers from both sides of the case were charged with the task of whittling the pool of 120 potential jurors down to 13 (12 jurors and one alternate). It was the largest venire in the history of Tallahatchie County.

For ordinary trials held in Tallahatchie County Courthouses, a 48-person venire is drawn from the appropriate side of the county. For trials in Sumner (where the Till trial was held) 48 men are drawn from the western side of the county (the Sumner side of the county). In capital cases,

however, a lawyer for either side may request a "special venire": a 120-person pool drawn from the entirety of the county (not just the west side). Judge Swango did so in the Emmett Till trial. Jury selection was more than a big job, it was also a critically important job. Lawyers on both sides of the case were hoping for jurors who would be friendly to their arguments. The importance of the decision is clear in the reaction of defense lawyer J. J. Breland. When the selection was complete, he claimed that "any first-year law student could have won the case." In light of the clear importance of the task, and the unexpected magnitude of the task, one wonders what principles should guide the selection of the jury.

READ

Whitaker, Hugh Stephen. "A Case Study in Southern Justice: The Emmett Till Case." Master's thesis, Florida State University (1963), 141 – 146.

INSTRUCTIONS

Defense lawyers and Prosecution lawyers: please describe the racial attitudes of those who you think would make ideal jurors. What kind of people will you look for? What questions will you ask? What would it take to disqualify a potential juror? As always, be sure to demonstrate with your post that you understand your character.

Jurors: In a real selection exercise, your job would be to answer questions that would help the lawyers know whether or not they wanted you on the case. In this simulation, please describe how you process the entire Emmett Till affair—from the violent murder, to the busy town of Sumner in the Delta, to the rich lawyers. All of this impacts you in particular ways. The more you can help the lawyers understand your worldview, the better.

Everyone else: Please choose one of the above characters, read their statement, and write a substantive response. Your response needs to demonstrate your mastery of your own character, and show how that character might interact with others. Touch on the Till murder, the character of the venire, the commitments of the lawyers, or the attitudes of others in attendance.

All characters should use their responses to create thoughtful, evidence-laden posts that reflect the political and social commitments of their characters.

Surprise 6: Where did the murder start?

BACKGROUND

On the fourth day of the trial—a puzzling question came to the foreground. Where, precisely, did the murder of Emmett Till begin? Did it begin at Bryant's Grocery & Meat Market in Money, Mississippi where, on Wednesday, August 24, Emmett Till whistled at Carolyn Bryant? Or, did it begin 2.8 miles away at the rural homestead of Moses Wright, from which Emmett Till was kidnapped at 2am on Sunday, August 29.

In legal terms, the conflict was over the res gestae of the case—or the start-to-end period of a felony. In Mississippi law, events that occurred outside the res gestae could not be submitted as evidence. While this might seem like arcane legal jargon, the stakes of the decision were high. If the court decided that the case began on August 29 at the home of Moses Wright, then nothing that happened before 2am on that morning would be admissible as evidence. Such a decision would disqualify a lot of events that the legal defense team found critically important: Till's whistle and whatever happened in Bryant's Grocery.

Naturally, the lawyers disagreed on the res gestae. The state (the prosecution) argued that the murder began at the home of Moses Wright. By insisting on a particular chronology and a particular geography, the state was trying to make Bryant's Grocery irrelevant. Any hint of sexual aggressiveness would hurt their case, so they insisted that the crime began late Sunday

night, three days after Till visited Bryant's Grocery. By eliminating the Grocery, they would also eliminate the possibility that Carolyn Bryant could testify and tell stories (true or false) about what, precisely, Emmett Till did in the store.

On the matter of the res gestae, the failure of the prosecution is of epic proportions. Beyond the fact that they failed to keep Carolyn Bryant from testifying, and thereby forcibly inserting Bryant's Grocery into the legal narrative of Till's death, they failed even to keep the relevance of Bryant's Grocery controversial. Immediately after the trial, the defense's argument that Till's murder began at Bryant's Grocery was treated as an uncontested fact rather than a partisan narrative designed to highlight black sexual aggression.

Perhaps the best example of the normalization of Bryant's Grocery comes from the legendary Kansas poet Langston Hughes. By October 1955, just one month after the trial, Hughes wrote the "The Money Mississippi Blues." Although the song was intended as a fundraiser for the NAACP, Hughes collapsed the entirety of Till's story into the town of Money, the one place the prosecution sought to avoid. Clearly, neither Hughes nor the NAACP understood the inclusion of Bryant's Grocery as a win for the legal defense team. In one month's time, the store had been transformed. It was once a strategy designed by the defense to ensure that murderers would walk free. One month later, it was a simple, uncontested fact that the murder began at the grocery store. Even Langston Hughes would, ironically enough, agree with the res gestae of the defense.

READ

Langston Hughes, "The Money, Mississippi Blues." In The Lynching of Emmett Till: A Documentary Narrative, ed. Christopher Metress (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 296-98.

Dave Tell, Remembering Emmett Till (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), chapter 4.

Read one of the following primary sources (note the different spin in the different sources).

"Judge Sends Jury out of Courtroom during Testimony of Defendant Roy Bryant's Wife." Jackson State Times. September 23, 1955. In The Lynching of Emmett Till: A Documentary Narrative, ed. Christopher Metress (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 89-92.

"Mrs. Bryant Tells How Northern Negro Grabbed Her, Wolf-Whistled in Store." Jackson Daily News. September 23, 1955. In The Lynching of Emmett Till: A Documentary Narrative, ed. Christopher Metress (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 93-96.

"Woman in Lynching Case Weaves Fantastic Story." Washington Afro-American. September 24, 1955. In The Lynching of Emmett Till: A Documentary Narrative, ed. Christopher Metress (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 96-97.

INSTRUCTIONS:

We know what happened historically, but this assignment is designed help you think through the issue from the perspective of your character and the perspective of someone very different from your character.

For this exercise, I am going to put you into groups of two or three characters. Each group will have a conversation about the contested res gestae of the case. The point is not what side you take—in fact, it is obvious what side you will take. Mamie Bradley, the black press, Willie Reed, Medgar Evers, and the prosecuting lawyers will argue that the murder did not begin until the early morning hours of August 29. Conversely, Carolyn Bryant, the white press, the defense lawyers, the murderers, and the sheriff will argue that the case began at Bryant's Grocery on August 24. Jurors—you can choose whatever side you like.

As you enter the conversation, the point is to support the proper side with arguments proper to your character. Enter the lifeworld of your character as you press your claims. More, consider the lifeworld of your conversation partner, and craft your arguments to their life-experiences and formative ideologies.
Each character should make at least three posts of moderate length to participate in the conversation.
Groups:
• Mamie Bradley and Carolyn Bryant
• Black press and the white press
• Lawyers (on both sides) and the jurors
• Willie Reed and the murderers
• Medgar Evers and Sheriff Strider

Surprise #7: Emmett Till was Killed in Sunflower County!
BACKGROUND
As the trial neared, no one knew where, precisely, Emmett Till was killed. It was generally accepted that Till was kidnapped from the home of his uncle Moses Wright and, three days later, recovered in the Tallahatchie River near a local landmark known as Pecan Point. Between these two reference points, however, Till's location was little more than conjecture. No one knew precisely where Till was thrown in the water, how far his body floated before reaching Pecan Point, or, critically, where he was murdered.
Knowing the murder site was important for a three reasons. First, it determined the proper venue for the trial. As late as the second day of the trial, the print media was speculating that the trial may shift to Leflore County, the site of the whistle and kidnapping.
Second, without a murder site, it would be difficult to win a conviction against the murderers. The black reporter Simeon Booker noted that a white reporter told him that the trial would be over quickly: "The State doesn't even know where this boy was killed." Before the trial began, defense lawyer J. J. Breland predicted victory based in part on the prosecution's inability to prove that the murder "happened in the second judicial district of Tallahatchie County."
Third, the selection of a murder site was integrally related to the size of the murder party. By moving the murder site away from Tallahatchie County (the site of the trial), one was forced to increase the size of the murder party. For this reason, suggestions that the trial was being held in the wrong venue were, at the same time, suggestions that an insufficient number of defendants were being tried.
It is with this background, that we need to review the shocking events of Tuesday, September 20, 1955, the second day of the trial.
Two days earlier, on Sunday the 18th, sharecropper Frank Young turned up at the doorstep of Mississippi activist T. R. M. Howard. He claimed that on the morning of the murder he saw Emmett Till, J. W. Milam, three other white men, and two other black men, on the Sturdivant Plantation in the heart of Sunflower County. His story was quickly corroborated by the independent inquiries of black journalist Jimmy Hicks.
This was earthshaking evidence. Not only did the black press have direct contact with an eyewitness, they had information that could shift the trial venue, and force the selection of an entirely new jury. What to do with intel of this import?
Because the black press understood that they would not be believed if they went public with the information, they devised an elaborate plan to get the information to Judge Curtis Swango.

Howard put Young's tale in writing and gave it to the most-trusted white journalist, Clark Porteous of the Memphis Press-Scimitar. Porteous, in turn, passed the note to prosecuting attorneys Gerald Chatham and Robert Smith, who passed it Judge Swango. Upon receiving the information, Swango stopped the trial in its tracks.

Over the lunch hour on Tuesday, Swango called an afternoon recess to consider the possibility that Till was killed in Sunflower County. Lawyers, lawmen, journalists, and activists raced to Sunflower County to look for eyewitnesses and evidence. Although they found a number of witnesses, and although one of them (Willie Reed) eventually testified in court, none of the white establishment took Sunflower County seriously as a murder site. Judge Swango refused to move the trial to a different venue, and the jury disbelieved Willie Reed.

READ

Clark Porteous, "Jury Being Chosen in Till Trial," Memphis Press-Scimitar, September 19, 1955.

Clark Porteous, "New Angle in Till Case Claimed," Memphis Press-Scimitar, September 20, 1955.

Booker, Simeon. "A Negro Reporter at the Till Trial." Nieman Reports 54/55 (Winter 1999 – Spring 2000): 136-37.

"Wolf Whistle Jury Panel Will be Selected Today," Memphis Press-Scimitar, September 12, 1955.

Dave Tell, Remembering Emmett Till (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2019), Chapter 1.

INSTRUCTIONS

At lunchtime on September 20, 1955, virtually everyone in the Sumner Courthouse was surprised by the possibility that Till may have been killed in Sunflower County. In the twenty-first century, we now know that Willie Reed and Frank Young were right: Till was indeed killed in Sunflower County. For this assignment, however, you need to go back to the afternoon of September 20th, when Sunflower County was little more than a long-shot theory (a theory, moreover, that would be officially renounced by the jury in three days time).

For this assignment, you will be working in your teams: the prosecution team, the defense team, and the jury.

The task of the defense is to generate a statement of why they need Till to be killed in Tallahatchie County. This is not a statement of facts (we already know what happened). It is a statement of need. Why do the particular characters on the prosecution team want to disbelieve Willie Reed? Why do they fight so stridently for Tallahatchie County? Be creative! In addition to looking for facts about your character, think about what you character would do in such a situation. Think about the commitments of your character, and how they might find expression in a situation like this. Make sure your statement represents all of the characters on your team. Everyone on the team will need to do the above reading, before crafting the statement.

The task of the prosecution is to generate a statement of why they need Till to be killed in Sunflower County. This is not a statement of facts (we already know what happened). It is a statement of need. Why do the particular characters on the defense team want to believe Willie Reed? Why do they fight so stridently for Sunflower County? Be creative! In addition to looking for facts about your character, think about what you character would do in such a situation. Think

about the commitments of your character, and how they might find expression in a situation like this. Make sure your statement represents all of the characters on your team. Everyone on the team will need to do the above reading, before crafting the statement.
Jurors, your job is to weigh these statements, not by their truthfulness, but by their fidelity to the characters as you know them. Please pick one argument made by each of the above teams, and craft a response that is designed to be thoughtful, critical, and which will start an ongoing conversation.

Surprise #8: Emmett Till is Alive!
BACKGROUND
When Mamie Bradley got home on Monday, August 29, about 36 hours after her son Emmett Till was killed and 24 hours after she learned he went missing, she found three phone messages waiting for her, allegedly from the Chicago Police Department. The messages suggested that her son Emmett was in fact alive, on his way home from Mississippi.
The messages were a hoax. Till was indeed dead and, two days later, his body would be discovered in the Tallahatchie River.
Hoax though it was, it previewed an important strategy of the legal defense: call into question whether or not Till was really dead. As unlikely as such a strategy may seem, it ended up being the primary argument of the defense.
On Wednesday, August 31, Tallahatchie County Sheriff H. C. Strider was at the bend in the Tallahatchie River near Pecan Point when Till's body was pulled from the water. Being the ranking public official on site, Strider filled out the death certificate. Box #3 on the form notes that the "Name of the Deceased" is "Emmett Louis Till." Box #21a: indicates that Till was a "homicide" victim killed by (box 21f notes) "gun shot or ax." Box #6 was critical. To the prompt "Color or Race," Strider wrote "Negro." The certificate filled out, Strider then called Chester Miller, manager of the local black mortuary, the Century Burial Association. Miller took the body and eventually released it to the family.
Three days later, on Saturday September 3, Strider changed his story. He announced that he did not believe the body pulled from the water was Emmett Till and he speculated that Till may be alive. Although he stated at the river that he believed the body was in the water two days, he now announced that it had been in the water at least ten days. This was a critical move. If the body was in the water ten days ten days before its August 31 retrieval, it could not possibly be Till, who was happily with his cousins as late as August 28. He even suggested that the entire thing might be a ploy by the NAACP, who hid Till up north, planted a different body in the river, and staged a lynching in order to embarrass Tallahatchie County.
On the fourth day of the trial—Thursday, September 22—the same arguments returned, this time with legal force. Now speaking under oath, Strider repeated his doubts about the identity of the body and his sense that the body had been in the water at least "ten days, if not fifteen." Despite his answer to Box #6 on the death certificate, and despite his choice to send the body to the black funeral home, Strider now claimed that he couldn't even tell if the body pulled from the water was black or white. "Well, if one of my own boys had been missing," Strider argued, " I couldn't really say if it was my own son or not, or anybody else's. I couldn't tell that. All I could tell, it was a human being."
Strider's testimony was followed by the testimony of Dr. L. B. Otken, a white Greenwood physician. Otken confirmed Strider's theories, giving medical prestige to Strider's claim that the body had been in the water at least ten days. "Up to two weeks," Otken said. White embalmer H.

D. Malone then rolled out a litany of scientific words: putrefaction, rigor mortis, ph balance, alkalinity, bacteria, enzymes—an entire scientific vocabulary deployed to prove that the body found in the river could not possibly belong to Emmett Till. It had been in the river too long, it was too decomposed, and it could not possibly be identified. Even by a mother, Otken added. Shortly after Malone testified, the defense rested, their entire argument—and the fate of two murderers—hinging on the suddenly ambiguous identity of the body in the water. Was it really Emmett Till? If so, Roy Bryant and and J. W. Milam would be found guilty. Or, did the body belong to somebody else? Perhaps it had been planted by T. R. M. Howard who, Strider implied, was a physician and could easily obtain a body to plant. If this was the case, Bryant and Milam would walk free. And that's just what they did.

READ:

Trial Transcript, 394-324. In Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), "Prosecutive Report of Investigation Concerning . . . Emmett Till, Deceased, Victim." February 9, 2006. www.fbi.gov.

"Charleston Sheriff Says Body in River Wasn't Young Till," Memphis Commercial Appeal (September 4, 1955). In The Lynching of Emmett Till: A Documentary Narrative, ed. Christopher
Metress (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 36-37.

"Mississippi Sheriff Voices Doubt Body Was That of Till," Greenwood (Miss. Morning Star), September 4, 1955, 1-2.

INSTRUCTIONS

From the perspective of the twenty-first century, it is clear that the consistent attempts to question the identity of the body were little more than a racist ploy designed to secure the acquittal of white men and the sustenance of white supremacy. The question for us is not, did Till really die. As good people knew then, and as we know now, Till was murdered and the body in the river belonged to him. And, if anyone still doubted it, in 2005 the FBI exhumed the body, performed a DNA analysis on the teeth, and confirmed the obvious: the body in the river did indeed belong to Till.

The real question is, what made such a wild conclusion seem reasonable in 1955? How might the various actors across the Till story engage with such a question? What preconceptions, backgrounds, or beliefs would be relevant as the original audience wrestled with the suddenly ambiguous body in the water?

To answer these questions, I've put you into four groups. Each group must generate a statement that speaks to the contest over the identity of the body (was it really Till's?) by marshalling convictions proper to the group members. Each statement should be three paragraphs long, with each paragraph articulating a distinct idea.

Once the four statements are posted, each character must, individually, reply to one of the statements (not one from their own group).

Groups:

- Medgar Evers, The black press, the prosecution
- Mamie Bradley, Willie Reed, the jurors
- Carolyn Bryant, white press
- Defense lawyers, murderers, Strider

Surprise #9: Emmett Till has been forgotten!

BACKGROUND

For forty-nine years and eleven months following the murder of Emmett Till, there was not a

single built memorial to the murder in the entire state of Mississippi. The silence was broken on July 1, 2005, when blue roadside markers were erected for the dedication of a thirty-mile stretch of Highway 49E as the “Emmett Till Memorial Highway.”

Since 2005, a commemorative boom has hit the Mississippi Delta. The region has spent upwards of five million dollars in the name of Till’s memory. There are now dozens of roadside markers, a museum, a walking trail, and an interpretive center. Most prominently, the Sumner courtroom which was home to the Till trial has been beautifully restored to its 1955 condition and now functions as both an operating courthouse and a living memorial.

Vandalism quickly followed. By June 2006, the highway sign was spray-painted with the letters “KKK.” In October 2007, a man was discovered with his truck chained to a freshly minted roadside marker, poised to rip it out of the sidewalk. He relented only when he learned that Emmett Till died at fourteen years old, the same age as his son. One year later, in October 2008, a sign marking the spot where Till’s body was recovered from the Tallahatchie River was stolen (only six months after it was installed!). The tire treads from the suddenly-empty aluminum posts to the riverbank led Tallahatchie County Sheriff William Brewer to surmise that the sign was now at the bottom of the river. The irony was not lost on the local black community, who saw it as a re-enactment of the murder itself. The sign, like Till’s body, had been disposed of in the Tallahatchie River. The sign was replaced, but it was quickly filled with bullet holes. Finally, in the summer of 2017, a historical marker outside of Bryant’s Grocery & Meat Market was defaced with acid and scraped clean.

The images of the bullet-hole riddled sign that once stood next to the Tallahatchie River and the acid-smeared sign that once marked Bryant’s Grocery are powerful reminders that Till’s story has never stopped surprising us. Even now, sixty-plus years after the murder, the commemoration of Till’s murder still cuts to the quick of racial politics in the MS Delta.